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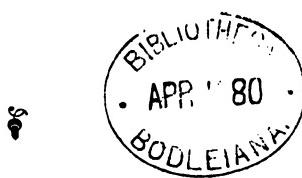
LAD-LIFE IN NORFOLK

BY

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"TRANS-ATLANTIC SKETCHES," "SONGS FOR MUSIC," &c.



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IN MEMORIAM.

L O U I S A E,

SORORIS DILECTISSIMÆ.



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INTRODUCTION.

TAM a lone man, and as I sit night after night in the vaults of the Museum, of which I am Curator, I often find myself falling into waking dreams. It was not thus before *she* died—before I lost that loving, bright-eyed, quiet, yet ever-cheerful little wife who was the “joy and crown” of my existence. Then, the long evenings passed quickly enough, for all that my work of labelling antiquities, classifying fossils, and cataloguing shells might seem dry and monotonous. But now, alas ! as I look up, no bright, smiling face meets me, and I remember that my heart’s desire and love is lying in the dark churchyard of St. Leonard’s Priory. And being, as I say, thus lonely, I fall into the habit of pondering long and often over the past, and of rebuilding the ruined castles

of my youth and early manhood. But although lonely and bereaved, I am not, thank God, unhappy.

My occupation is not uncongenial to me, and the bread one earns by head-work or hand-work is sweet. Though poor, I am content, and have friends withal, whom, if I am spared, I may visit in my three weeks' holiday in the summer-time. Two nights in the week, too (and this is my greatest pleasure), I am present at a club of young mechanics—brave lads with fustian jackets and horny hands—to whom I impart what information I can from my scanty stock of knowledge of natural history, and to whom I read poetry and novels. On Saturdays, and mayhap on Sunday afternoons, I outwend from the smoky, manufacturing town wherein I dwell, and ascend that high, isolated, craggy hill, from whence, afar off, I can discern the faint blue mists that hang over the valley of the Trent. And Trent, I know, falls into Humber, and Humber bears on its broad, brown bosom stately Baltic ships, and mingles its waters with that fresh, free Northern Ocean, beside whose waves I passed some of my happiest childish days. And these thoughts please me. Indeed, all the recollections of past times bring with them sweet consolation as I do battle with the living present, and so I cherish them. This dreamy reascending, however, and dwelling upon the first rungs of my life-ladder, to which, since my bereavement, I have become so much addicted,

albeit it is sweet and soothing, has begotten in me a wish to reconstruct, for the benefit, if not of others, at least of my little son, who sleeps up yonder in the garret wherein are stowed the bones of the whale and the camel and other unattractive curiosities—to reconstruct, I say, the true story of my life, or at all events of my earlier years. Perchance, methinks, a true record of the sorrows and failings and falls which I have survived, may, like a beacon, warn my little boy to flee the sand-banks upon which his father struck.

Perchance I, perhaps presumptuously, think I may have left—as a true poet, whose works I thank God I have lived to read, expresses it—

“Footprints which perhaps another,
Travelling o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn, a shipwreck'd brother,
Seeing, may——”;

I will not say “take heart again,” but take warning from. To me, at least, it is sweet *renovare dolores*, and a pleasure to disinter buried joys. Whatever may be my future, the past is an heritage which no one—no, not even the almighty Aldermen who are Trustees of the Museum, and who so often sit upon me in committee because I know more about art and antiquities than they do themselves—can take from me. To me the “Dead Past” is full of life, while

the "Living Present" seems like a dream. I write, therefore, the record of my Lad-life, feeling that if I write at all I must write the *truth*, and must tell things *as they were*, not as they *ought to have been*. At all events, I trust that in what I have to relate there is nought of offence either to God or man.

JULIAN CLOUGHTON.

MIDLAND MUSEUM.





JULIAN CLOUGHTON.

CHAPTER I.

Cadger Cloughton—Godmother Grigs—The Forty Thieves—
The Mangle—Gallinaceous Sterility—Our Neighbours—
Gaffer.

I WAS born in the old city of Norwich, and was
an only child. By birth I was a cadger—
that is, I was a cadger, if cadgering or anything
else but redness and flatness and a predisposition
to squealing can be properly predicated of one
of those uncomely “little strangers,” a new-born
baby. What I mean to imply is that I was a
cadger’s son. My father, Peter Cloughton, although
legally designated “a licensed hawker,” called
himself a “dealer,” but to his intimate associates
he was always known as “Cadger,” or “Cadger
Cloughton.” My father’s occupation was to hawk
about the country with a cart drawn by two dogs,

two great shock-haired, patient creatures, which I fear got many kicks and but little food. The articles my father dealt in were miscellaneous rather than select, and they consisted chiefly of rags, bones, rabbit-skins, bottles, and bits of old metal. Sometimes, moreover, if report speaks truly, he had no objection, "in the season of the year," to give a lift into the old city to a wired hare or a poached pheasant. These, however, were always disposed of before he came home, perhaps from a lingering feeling of respect to his most faithful and most injured wife—that wife whose sole fault in the eyes of those who knew her was her loving and marrying him; that wife to whose influence, uncertain though it was, might be traced whatever of good he either did or thought.

When I was six weeks old, a great contention arose between my parents as to whether or no I should be christened. For once my mother carried her point, and I was taken to the little church of St. Julian, and there baptised. I was named Julian, after that most respectable saint, at the instance of Mrs. Grigs, my godmother, who was the wife of the clerk of the parish, and who, like a good Christian, always acted as godmother when the proper number of sponsors were not forthcoming. In fact, as the good old soul afterwards boasted to my mother, I was her fortieth godchild, which she considered a highly lucky

number, as there were forty days of Lent and forty thieves, all of whom were scalded to death in boiling oil by Morgiana the Clever. From this singular coincidence Mrs. Grigs proceeded to deduce the consoling conclusion that I, Julian Cloughton, would always be remarkable for the strictest honesty, an opinion which was instantly adopted by my mother as being creditable in its nature, and at least as likely as any that could be formed while I was yet unweaned and in "long clothes," and consequently pretty secure from breaking or being tempted to break the eighth commandment.

By the time I was between two and three years old, I began to perceive two things : first, that I was all in all to my mother ; and, secondly, that my father had no affection for me whatsoever. In fact, his treatment of me was so brutal that I feared him, and dreaded his return at nights, and I was always glad to be safe in bed when he came home.

Some time afterwards, I remember that my mother took me to Mrs. Grigs, and left me with that lady three whole days, and that she came back dressed all in black, with a close-fitting white cap upon her head. And I recollect that she cried a great deal, and that she told me she had been away to a village near Holt to bury my poor father, who had died suddenly. How I wondered what that meant ! But I cried because

mother cried. When, however, she told me that father would never come back again at nights, I dried my tears, and secretly felt strangely glad. And then I have hazy recollections of the arrival of some great machine, with rollers and pulleys, amongst which I was continually pinching my fingers; and of our house being always full of steam, and always smelling of soap. My mother now took in washing.

I must now try to describe our house. It was the middle one of a row of three cottages which stood on the verge of a steep hill just within the city, and which overlooked the river, with its sleepily-busy wharfs, and, far beyond, its windings amongst the green meadows. The whole row was built of faced flints and red bricks, but here and there old grey, weather-stained freestones were worked in, which, with the flints, were quarried from the ancient city walls, which, close to an old bastion tower, ran down the hill at right angles to the last cottage of the row, and only ended at the river. We had but two rooms —our living-room, and a sleeping-room above; but in each of these was a large light closet. In the upper one of these I slept; in that below we kept coals, candles, an old handleless bill-hook, and other household articles. In front we possessed a little strip of land separated from the street by a railing, and containing a little green and white summer-house, a

poplar tree, and an old wooden kennel, wherein my father's dogs had formerly been kept, but which was afterwards tenanted by an old cock, two elderly hens, and a stunted bantam of a curious, peaking, and irritable temperament. Types of sterility were these fowls, one and all, and guiltless of even an intention of egg-laying. But it must not be supposed we were altogether without flowers. A dusty tea-creeper climbed over and enarched the door with its wiry leafage and strange alternate flowers of nankeen colour and purple, and we had one plant of the larger periwinkle, and (as if in derision of the barren fowls) two of the hen-and-chicken daisies. In addition to these, my mother sowed annually on the fifth of May, her wedding day, a few scarlet-runner beans, more than one of which never came up, and in no year was any plant known to produce more than three pods and five beans. In front, a path ran down between two low stone walls to the river, and behind, a dirty alley, "Bigg's Lane," connected us with the rest of the city. Next door to us, on the one hand, lived an old washerwoman, Mrs. Garrett, with her slatternly but handsome daughter Sally, both of whom quarrelled with my mother when she too began to "take in" washing. Next door, on the other hand, lived one Michael or Mick Doughty and his two sons, three great idle fellows, who ostensibly gained their livelihood by dredging or *didling* in the

river. To the Doughtys appertained a large bulldog named Gaffer, with whom I early made friends. Such was our house and such our neighbours, but with none of them, Gaffer excepted, had we any dealings. So Mother and I were all in all to each other.





CHAPTER II.

Boys in Purple—The Good Bishop—Uncle Sam's—"Gripe,
yer fule, look alive"—The Picture—Let me be a Chorister
—School-days—In the Cloisters.

MOTHER had an uncle on her father's side, who lived at the other end of the city. He kept a small shop of second-hand goods and marine stores, and, although he lived very poorly, was reported to be rich. Now and then, but not often, I was taken to see him. Oh, well do I recollect the day, the first marked one in my life, and one which had some influence at least on my future lot, when I was eight years old! A long-made promise to pay a visit to Uncle Sam was then to be fulfilled. It was past the middle of one of the last days of November when we started, and the weather was cold and dull and damp. After walking a considerable distance (we went out of our way to deliver a bundle of clean linen), I noticed a vast building, with whose exterior I was well acquainted, but which I had never approached before. I begged Mother to take me inside. She at

length complied, and, seizing me by the hand, led me under a lofty portal. Even at that early age I was astonished and awed at the vast size and grandeur of the pile. On either side stood huge and massive columns capped by round arches, and spreading out far overhead stretched away a roof of fretted stone. We slowly advanced down the centre, when suddenly strains of deep music rang through the edifice, and I saw a procession approaching, headed by a number of little boys clothed in purple. Some clergymen in white vestments followed, and then, last of all, came a venerable but still vigorous personage with snowy hair, dark eyebrows, and dark, piercing eyes. When this train had passed through an arched door into a space beyond dimly lighted by wax tapers, we followed, and then I heard a clear musical voice, and then Mother knelt on the ground, and made me follow her example. Then, rising, I again heard strains of music and waves of melody, which echoed around me and thrilled my every nerve. Long I stood rooted to the ground, drinking in the music with my ears, and as if I were in a happy dream. I was roused by hearing my mother sobbing, but she brushed away her tears and led me hastily away. I could not speak at first, but when I could, I asked about all I had seen and heard. Then Mother told me I had been in the great Cathedral Church, and that the strong, old, snowy-haired man was the good

Bishop ; that the boys in purple were called choristers, and that their business was to sing the praises of God.

“ Let me be a chorister, Mother,” said I ; but before she could answer, we turned in at Uncle Sam’s.

I have already explained that my mother’s paternal uncle, whom I now introduce as Mr. Samuel Breeze, kept a small shop of second-hand goods and furniture. In this very shop we found him. I hope I may not be suspected of being without natural affection, when I declare that my mother’s uncle was as ill-favoured and foxy-looking an old gentleman as can well be imagined. He had narrow, cunning eyes and reddish hair, and his face was adorned by a great superfluity of pimples—a peculiarity which was ascribed by his enemies to his excessive fondness for gin and water cold. This, it may be, was only scandal, but it must be conceded, in favour of the hostile parties, that a strong smell of spirits pervaded the premises. As we entered, Uncle Sam was sitting in an old-fashioned arm-chair smoking a pipe, and between Uncle Sam’s legs sat an ugly half-bred bull-dog, white, with brown blotches, which growled ominously on our appearance. Uncle Sam did not get up, but he took his pipe out of his mouth with his right hand, while he shook hands with Mother with the left. Then, seeing that I looked frightened at the dog, he addressed me —“ Well, young Kiddy, how are yer? There, bor,

don't go fur to whine and fret, or I'll set Gripe on yer in arnest. Gripe, yer fule, look alive there!"

At this genial salutation I burst right out a-crying, which so angered Uncle Sam that he pushed Mother before him into an inner room, and shut to the door, leaving me in the front shop. I was terribly scared at this proceeding, as I fully expected to be forthwith worried by Gripe. Gripe, however, after smelling at me for some time, wagged his stump-tail, which encouraged me warily to pat his rough back, upon which he wagged his tail again. This second wag put all my fears to flight, and I began to play with him, and soon found that he improved wonderfully upon acquaintance. For, not to mention that I discovered an extraordinary resemblance between him and Gaffer, he kept running about in the funniest manner imaginable (sometimes backwards) amongst the lumber with which the shop was filled. When I tried to catch him, he dashed through the legs of old tables and chairs, and then turned round as if to laugh (which indeed I am convinced he did) at my vain endeavours to follow him. At last, just when I thought I had pinned him up in a corner, he suddenly rushed between my legs, and bolted out into the street. As I dared not leave the house, I was fain to remain looking at the goods which were piled up in every direction, and which to me were a complete mine of curiosities. During my examina-

tion, I observed behind an old piano an ancient picture hung on the wall. In trying to reach this, I suddenly lost my balance, and fell across the keys of the piano. The noise of my fall added to the triumphant barking of Gripe, who, rushing in as fast as he had formerly rushed out, soon brought my mother and uncle out of the inner room. The former, seeing that I was not hurt, asked what I had been doing. I answered that I wanted to get at the old picture behind the furniture, and that if I tumbled twenty times I would reach it at last. Then Uncle Sam called me "a gamey young shaver," and after some trouble in reaching down the picture, and the stirring up of suffocating clouds of dust, he told my mother that I might have "the old gay" for my own, if we could manage to carry it home. I was overjoyed when she consented, and after a few minutes, having wished Uncle Sam and Gripe good-bye, we were on the way home. The night was frosty and the sky clear, and as I looked up at the stars which spangled the calm, silent heavens, I forgot all I had last seen, and my mind returned to the great church, and I thought how much more beautiful and vast the sky was than the roof of that huge pile, and how much more beautiful must be the songs of the Holy Angels in Heaven, whereof Mother had told me, than even the solemn music of the organ and the voices of the choristers, which still thrilled my very heart.

When Mother came that night, according to custom, to kiss me in my little crib before I went to sleep, I whispered, "Let me be a chorister, Mother." There was no answer, but a tear fell upon the wick of the rushlight which she held in her hand, and extinguished the light. Mother was crying!

Next morning, when I opened my eyes, I saw a sweet and gentle face looking down upon me. The great full eyes were dark, but soft and sad, and long masses of gold-gleaming hair fell down in waving tresses on either side of an oval face. The hands were clasped, as if in some great sorrow. So sweet a face I was not used to see, and the beauty of woman and the magic power of art made a deep and ineffaceable impression upon my mind, although I was so small a boy, and the son of a cadger and a poor washerwoman. It was the picture given me by Uncle Sam, and the work, doubtless, of some long-dead Italian hand.

When I sat at breakfast the next morning, Mother told me she had been thinking all night about my wish to be a chorister—that she thought my wish a good one, and that she had resolved to make inquiries on the subject. Accordingly, she started after breakfast to call on Dr. Belton, the Cathedral organist, but soon returned with the bad news that he had declared that it was impossible to admit me; "even," said he, "if I had the voice of an angel." There was no vacancy at present, and the next was promised to

the second son of the Dean's butler. This was indeed sad news, but there was no help for it. After this, when school was over (for I went to school now every day), I used often to run down to the Cathedral, and it was my greatest pleasure, eluding the crusty old vergers, to stand in some remote part of the church, and listen whilst the majestic tones of the organ rang along the arched roof and pealed through the dusky aisles. By-and-by, too, I made acquaintance with some of the choristers, and many a merry game I had with them in the cloisters, and in the Cathedral-yard outside the southern door. Thus passed that winter and the next without incident worthy of note; but at the beginning of the summer following, an event occurred which I must record in the next chapter.





CHAPTER III.

Greenstaith—Abaft the Line—Down, down!—Saved—The
“Fisherman’s Arms”—Red-faced Ben—The Canon
Washing—Going away.

BELLOW the city, embosomed in rustling poplars and aspens and huge willow trees, stands on the breezy river-bank the tiny hamlet of Greenstaith. Here dwelt an old friend of my mother, one Mrs Huxtable, the landlady of a little waterside inn much resorted to in summer by the citizens of Norwich. It was to this inn that I was to be taken by Mother, at the special invitation of Mrs. Huxtable on the last Saturday of June. We were to go down the river in a steamer, to spend the day at the Fisherman’s Arms, to dine upon fish caught straight out of the river, to have country cream for tea, and to come home by the return steam-packet in the evening. The prospect of these varied treats excited me to such a degree that, as my mother observed, it seemed as if the house was not large enough to hold me for a week beforehand. I hardly slept

wink the night before the great day, and early on the appointed morning got up to see whether the day would be fine.

As I peeped out of my little window, a beautiful scene presented itself. The sun had just risen, and gilded the masts of the small craft lying motionless on the river below, whose gently-eddying surface was tufted every here and there with tiny wreaths of mist, which seemed to struggle against being carried under by the lazy current. No one was stirring as yet on the staiths save one sailor lad, in blue jersey and scarlet cap, who was playing with a water-dog. The valley beyond, through which the river pursued its peaceful course, was covered with a dense low-lying mist of snowy whiteness, from which every now and then a lofty willow, or the tall mast and red streamer of a wherry, towered up into the sunlight. On either side the richly wooded hills which bounded the valley seemed to rejoice in the heat of the summer sun. Over all hung a cloudless blue sky. The day would be fine, there was no doubt about it. All my anxiety was over, and I returned to bed and slept soundly until Mother came to waken me.

The packet was not to start until half-past eight, but I succeeded in dragging my mother to the wharf by half-past seven. And here, although Mother was, as she expressed it, "well-nigh worried to dead," I was delighted in the highest degree. I was about

to embark in a steamboat, a vessel of vast size and mysterious construction. I did not believe that one of the choristers, nor even Uncle Sam, had ever been in one. The very moment the plank was placed, I succeeded in forcing Mother to go aboard. But now a difficulty ensued. An inscription presented itself in all the magnificence of capitals and gold paint, declaring, *Passengers going abaft this line to pay saloon fare.* What "abaft" meant, and where the line was, when the whole vessel seemed a perfect labyrinth of cordage, neither Mother nor I, in our profound ignorance of seafaring matters, could divine, and accordingly she at once conducted me to the stern of the vessel. Here, however, we were met by a good-natured-looking, red-faced lad, who wore a blue pilot coat and a low-crowned hat, with "Black-eyed Susan" painted round it in gold letters, and carried a white pink between his teeth, who put us right, and caused us to retreat to the other end. The whole appearance of this young man inspired me with the deepest admiration and respect, the latter emotion being heightened by my observing that his right wrist was tattooed with the figure of a mermaid, two anchors, a heart pierced by six arrows, and the letters "M. A. H." Mother suggested that this pictorial effort was the work of "Indians," but my after acquaintance with the Fisherman's Arms and its inmates gave a surer clue to the

mystery. Passengers now came flocking aboard. First came a portly, elderly personage in shovel hat and knee-breeches, who supported on his arm a beautiful young lady, apparently his daughter; then Mr. Grimble, a sallow gentleman who owned a cheap "tea mart" in the city and a villa near Greenstaith, and who always took the chair at teetotal meetings and at the anniversaries of Anabaptist meeting-houses; then two or three sailors, with their effects seemingly stowed away in bolster-cases; then five or six labourers going to work in a chalk-pit; and then a bell rang fiercely, and we were off.

Oh, the pleasure of that, my first voyage upon the broad, gently-eddying river, which the paddle-wheels dashed into silver spray! Oh, the joy of passing rapidly between the green, green meadows, where the rich grass almost reached the udders of the placid cattle as they grazed, and whence the scent of the white, feathery meadow-sweet was borne to us upon the breeze with almost intoxicating sweetness! And oh, how Mother entered into my joy! When at last she pointed out the Fisherman's Arms, and fat Mrs. Huxtable and her fat, rosy daughter upon the little pier, I felt quite sorry, and longed to go on in the steamer to its destination. As soon as we were directly opposite Greenstaith, a boat put off to land the passengers. First the clergyman and his

daughter got out, then Mr. Grimble, then two of the labourers with their mattocks on their shoulders and their dinners tied up in old cotton handkerchiefs, and, last of all, Mother and I. As soon as I had been lowered into the boat, it was shoved off suddenly, when I, who was leaning carelessly over the side with my hands in the water, lost my balance and fell into the river. The paddle-wheels whirled round at the same moment, and I was carried some way off the boat. I gave a cry, struggled, heard another cry which I knew to be Mother's, struggled again, and sank.

Down, down, down! My head felt as if it were bursting. Down, down, down! I tried to cry out, but was choked by the bubbling waters. Down, down, down! My frame seemed rent with agony, and then all pain was over. Down, down! I thought I saw my father; I thought I saw Gaffer. I thought I was at Uncle Sam's, and played with Gripe amongst the furniture, and pinched his tail. The soft, dark Italian eyes of my favourite picture seemed to gaze mournfully into mine, while water streamed from the golden hair. I thought I was in the great Cathedral Church, and that I heard the pealing sound of the organ and the voices of my chorister friends ascending like angels' music beyond the stars, and anon returning and thrilling along the vaulted roof. Down, down, down! I thought no

more. The green waters had closed over the head of the only son, and the widowed mother stood upon the shore.

Childless, however, that widowed mother was not destined to be. The providence of the Father of the fatherless and of the God of the widow had otherwise ordained. I was saved. One of the sailors, whose baggage had so much amused me when I came on board, threw himself into the water, and after much difficulty dragged my almost lifeless body to the bank. Then, swimming back to the steamer, he re-embarked, and we never learned even the name of my preserver. And yet there is a Book wherein the name of that gallant man is registered, and there is a day when it shall be revealed! For long I lay insensible. The first thing I remember after coming to myself is, that I found myself lying in a little white bed, with my head resting on Mother's arm. A portly clergyman was kneeling in prayer at the bedside, and a young lady was standing over me, with Mrs. Huxtable, who was brandishing a huge glass of hot spirits and water. The crisis had passed—my life was spared—but the shock to my delicate frame was great. Long I lay on that little white bed, tended by the kindly hands of Mrs. Huxtable and Mary Ann, her blooming daughter, and watched over with loving care by the best of mothers. For some time I was too weak

to talk much, but I used to lie dreamily gazing on the beams of light which, reflected from the river close below, danced on the whitewashed ceiling, and listening to the cooing of the pigeons on the roof outside, and to the songs of the wherrymen as they passed and repassed on the river.

Long I lay in this half-dreamy state, and longer still, when Mother had gone home to her washing, did I remain a willing guest at the snug Fisherman's Arms, at the pressing invitation of its cosy hostess. I could not walk far when I first got out; but daily I wandered about the neighbouring water-meadows, and by the breezy river-bank, and to an old ruined round church-tower which crowned a low cliff of white chalk and yellow gravel, and hung over the lordly Yare. Then, too, sometimes I would go a-fishing, and many were the striped perch and speckled ruffs and silver roach which I pulled out of the holes under the old alders and willow trees. And I made acquaintance with a little old fisherman, who lent me that sweet pastoral, "The Complete Angler" of good Izaak Walton, and taught me to set liggers for eels, and on one of them, to my great triumph, I one day caught a large pike. But an even more important event to me than this piscatorial feat was my first reading of that noble and essentially *English* book, "Robinson Crusoe," a copy of which I found in the inn parlour. To me

this work was a perfect mine of interest and a new world of amusement, and I devoured it again and again. I felt proud that I had been born in Norfolk, because Robinson Crusoe had suffered shipwreck in Yarmouth Roads, had got safe to shore "past the lighthouse at Winterton Ness," and had walked thence on foot to Yarmouth. It is true that I did not then, like a child I have since known, look anxiously on the floor, when I first awoke in the morning, for the *one* footprint; but I thought then, as I am inclined to think still, that no finer stroke can be found in any book of fiction that ever was published. Twice a-day, whilst I remained at Greenstaith, when the steamer came down in the morning and returned in the evening, I became quite a little hero, being always pointed out by the man at the wheel to the passengers as "the little shaver what had got so nearly drownded;" and Ben West, the good-natured, red-faced lad who had put Mother and me right when we came on board, and who was supposed (although, spite of the "M. A. H." tattooed on his wrist, he always denied it) to be over head and ears in love with Mrs. Huxtable's pretty daughter Mary Ann, had a never-failing source of conversation in my misadventure and narrow escape. Once indeed, as the packet was setting down passengers, Ben was heard to remark to Mary that "he'd be blowed if he didn't drownd

hisself right opposite the Fisherman's Arms for the mere pleasure of being nuss'd by somebody ;" to which that young lady replied, "Get out, do, you stupid thing!"—a remark which, as he was not *in*, did not seem to be particularly apposite to the occasion.

Mother had returned to her work about six or seven weeks when she again came back to take me home. I was dearly sorry to leave the Fisherman's Arms, and Mrs. Huxtable and Mary ; but I was partly reconciled when I re-entered my little early-familiar bed-closet and saw on the canvas those dark, mournful eyes which had seemed to gaze upon me under the green waters. The morning after my return home, we were surprised by a visit from our neighbour, Mick Doughty. "He came," he said, "as how he wor glad the bor had coom back, right and tight like, and had brought him a pint o' shrimps and a lot o' pinpatches as Bill Nicolls had brought up along o' the coal wherry." We thanked him heartily, and when he was gone, I could see Mother was quite upset by his rough but unexpected kindness.

"Oh, Julie," she said, "it isn't the value of the thing, it's the kind thought that does my heart good, and one comes to feel that when one's left to battle alone as I am."

In a few days, too, we had a visit from the portly

clergyman we had on board the steamer, who told my mother that he was the new Canon of the Cathedral, and that it was his intention to give her all his household washing to do. A small thing this to others; to those as poor as we were, a great boon!

For a short time after my return home, I continued to grow stronger; but while I was still weak, I caught cold, which threw me back. Then for some weeks I kept on becoming thinner and thinner, and weaker and weaker. At length Mother became alarmed, and, at the desire of the good Canon, took me to see and be seen by Dr. Wolterton. He at once declared I must have change of air, and that, if possible, by the seaside. This set Mother thinking. She was far too poor to leave her washing and take me anywhere. What then could be done? At length it struck her that an old maternal uncle, a fisherman, who had formerly served under Nelson, and with whom she had had no communication for years, was living by the sea at St. Olave's, Highcliff. To him then she accordingly wrote, and in four days received an answer. He said he should be most happy to see his grand-nephew, and hoped he would come and stay with him as long as possible. I was delighted at the prospect of seeing the sea, for, as I have said already, I had read "Robinson Crusoe," and everything connected with the ocean was now interesting to me. As to Mother, although evidently

afraid to trust me out of her sight, she was much pleased with her old uncle's ready kindness, and on the following Wednesday, which was the day fixed by my grand-uncle, she gave me over to the charge of the St. Olave's carrier, with strict injunctions that I should be delivered safely into the hands of Mr. Matthew Grimmer.





CHAPTER IV.

The Carrier's Cart and the Carrier's Dog—The Sea—Cousin Bill—I'll be a Smuggler—St. Olave's, Highcliff—Ernsey Tower—Dame Goodram—The Gull.

EVER shall I forget that journey, that pleasant journey in the carrier's cart, nor Richard Hutton, the carrier himself, nor Richard Hutton's old dog which was tied underneath the cart, and which seemed to consider everything in and about that ponderous vehicle his own particular property, and that everything and everybody besides was a natural enemy, and only created to be barked at. The distance from Norwich to St. Olave's was under thirty miles, but we were all day upon the road. The country through which we passed was not what most people would call beautiful, but to my eyes, accustomed as I was to the city, it was wonderful and beautiful exceedingly. The long swathes of ground covered with purple heather, now in flower, filled my heart with inexpressible delight, and I felt certain that the stacks of peat or turf, which had

been cut and piled up for fuel, were the exact image of the wigwams of the savages of which I had read in some story or book of travels. The stately flint towers, too, of the old country churches, and the tidy farmsteads and white cottages, were to me an unfailing source of interest and pleasure. Not a bird flew out of a bush, not a flower opened its petals by the wayside, without awakening new sensations of delight. But I was still very weak and poorly, and the change of scene and air, combined with the lazy motion of the cart, lulled me towards evening to sleep.

When roused up, we were at St. Olave's, and old Grimmer was there to meet me and give me a hearty welcome. Clinging to a rough hand, which in the darkness seemed to belong to an old man in sou'-wester hat and oilskin coat, I wended in silence to my new abode. The pathway led along the cliffs. I felt strange, but happy, and my heart rose high when I heard the sea-surges and dimly marked their white crests as they broke upon the strand, and as I smelt that life and health-giving odour which belongs to the ocean alone. Afar off, on a low headland, burned a beacon fire, and from its rays of light were reflected on the plashing tide to the foot of the cliffs. I felt sorry when, having descended into a kind of nook, we arrived at Uncle Grimmer's. But I was not sorry long, for I had to

kiss and be kissed by Aunt Grimmer, a venerable woman with snowy hair and cap, and to shake hands with Bill, her orphan grandson, a fine-looking young man with light curling locks and bright, honest, blue eyes, and who wore the most astoundingly enormous pair of boots conceivable. Supper was ready when we entered, and we soon sat down to table. I was hungry after my journey, and ate two whole herrings, to the great contentment of my aunt, who, I saw, was much alarmed at my slight form and sickly looks. After supper, I was taken to a little room wherein I was to sleep, and after I had said my prayers aloud (I almost cried when I mentioned Mother), for my aunt's especial benefit, she tucked me in and left me. But I could not settle in bed. There was a window in my closet, and at it I kneeled on a chair for more than an hour, gazing on the sea below me, and on the stars which gleamed forth from the blue depths of sky between long ranges of fleecy clouds. Then I crept to bed, and was soon fast asleep.

Next morning was gloriously fine. I rose early, and found Cousin Bill braiding a fishing-net outside the door. I was rather shy at first, but soon got on with him capitally. For, not to mention his bright, honest face, he seemed to me a very book of information and amusement, so many stories did he tell me of fish and fishing, and of the sea gleaming like

molten fire when the nets were drawn by night, and of storms and wrecks, and of bodies of drowned seamen floating on the waves, with sea-birds flapping around them, uttering loud, discordant screams, but not daring as yet to settle; and of falls of the cliff, and of smugglers (I instantly resolved to be a smuggler if I grew up to be a man), and of the other experiences incident to a life on the sea-coast. I found, moreover, that my red-faced friend, Ben West, was also a friend of Cousin Bill's, he having sailed with him across to Flushing only the year before; and Cousin Bill laughed long and loud when I told him of Ben's devotion to Mrs. Huxtable's *Mary Ann*, as he had sworn eternal fidelity to a young lady of Dutch build and parentage in some village near the mouth of the Scheldt. After breakfast, Bill went out fishing, my uncle set to work to bait some crab "corfs," and my aunt took me with her "to do some jobs," as she expressed it, in the village.

And here I must describe St. Olave's. It is a knot of small houses, chiefly inhabited by fishermen, situated upon the slopes of a hill, upon whose rounded and grassy summit stands a grand and ancient church. Just beyond the churchyard wall, on the north side, is a precipitous descent of perhaps a hundred feet to the beach. Facing the sea, the eye ranges, on the one hand, over a long extent of low coast, bordered by sandy "dunes" or "meals,"

scantly covered with silver marram-grass, spiny eringo, and the dark-green-leaved, star-flowered sea-convolvulus. On the other hand the cliffs run along a few miles, and form a promontory, crowned by the lighthouse I had noticed on my arrival. A deep and steep gangway leads down from the village to the beach, which was strewn with fishing-boats and crab corfs, and as I descended, I saw that the sea itself was alive with small boys and girls screaming with delight as they waded up to the middle in the tiny wavelets which rippled on the sandy shore.

My delight at the sea and at my life at St. Olave's increased daily, and I soon grew strong and well. I was out all day by, on, and in the sea—sometimes going out lobstering with my uncle—sometimes taking long strolls with companies of other boys to collect shells from the beach, "tomtads" on the rocks at low water, or fossils from the cliffs; and once, under the charge of Cousin Bill, I went out for five whole days and nights in the great yawl, "Good Intent," to see the deep-sea fishing. One other excursion I must mention, for it was the one I most liked, and I always set out upon it alone. It was to the ruined church of Ernsey. A stranger place I have scarcely ever seen. Apart from any existing village, amongst the sand-hills by the sea-shore, rises the lonely tower of the sacred pile. The nave and chancel of the church are destroyed, and the frag-

ments which lie upon the beach are daily covered by the sea at high water. At spring-tides the bones of the dead are frequently washed from their resting-place, and strewn about the strand, or swept far out to sea. The lower part of the tower, which is round below and octagonal above, is buried in sand drifted by the wind; but the second story, which was accessible only by a ladder, was, at the time I speak of, tenanted by an old woman named Goodram. How Dame Goodram gained her living was a mystery which few could satisfactorily explain. She had, to all appearance, no relations; she had no work, but day after day wandered alone along the sea-shore gathering pieces of driftwood and other waifs thrown up by the sea. Dame Goodram was a reputed witch or "wise woman," and certainly her personal appearance was grim enough. She was very tall; her eyes were dark-grey, restless, and wild almost to fierceness; her hair was long, partly jet-black, partly grey. In age, she must have passed three-score years and ten. It was whispered at St. Olave's that, when contrary winds or bad weather interrupted the fishing for long together, some of the fishermen would secretly resort to the tower of Ernsey, under cover of night, to induce by Dame Goodram's charms a favourable change, and it was said that many a love-sick fisher lad or maiden would go thither to procure a philtre to incite love

in the heart of the object of their passion. Be this as it may, Dame Goodram, whose acquaintance I early made on the shore, was very kind to me, and in an odd way we became great friends. It is perhaps strange that in my presence she never, as she was wont, laid any sort of claim to anything of supernatural power. On the contrary, she used to tell me stories almost in derision of the credulity of some of the folks who had raised her to the equivocal dignity of "wise woman" to the neighbourhood.

One afternoon, at my earnest request, Dame Goodram took me up into her strange dwelling, and displayed to me her treasures. Her room, like the upper portion of the tower, was octagonal, and was very gloomy, although it was partially enlivened by a fire of driftwood. Upon a shelf near the fire-place lay a human hand, still preserving its articulation, and held together by the dried and shrivelled cartilages. Upon it gleamed a massive antique ring of gold. This, I was told, was picked up on the beach near the churchyard wall after an extraordinarily high tide. Upon various other shelves, most of which had evidently formed part of the furniture of wrecked ships, were confusedly heaped together immense stores of jet and amber, beautiful agates, jaspers, and cornelians from the beach, and fossil teeth and bones from the cliffs and neighbouring submarine forest which would have made the heart

of a geologist to leap within him. There were four windows enclosing portions of quatrefoil tracery in the old woman's apartment, of which those that looked over the sea and up and down the strand were made to open. The fourth window, however, which looked landwards, had evidently not been opened for years, and was entirely covered by a dense blind formed by the interlacing leaves and branches of a row of sickly, climbing geraniums growing in pots and broken jugs. The window-sill underneath these plants was, as I noticed with surprise, crowded with hundreds of dead and living butterflies, and with the shrivelled cases which had contained them in the chrysalis state. Before my departure I was startled by a low croak. Looking down, I beheld in the corner of the fire-place, sitting on the grotesque figure-head of some stranded vessel, a huge tame sea-gull of the largest species. This was Dame Goodram's sole companion.

From that day forward I became a frequent and welcome visitor at Ernsey Tower, and many were the curious and interesting conversations which I had with this strange and weird old woman.



CHAPTER V.

Stormy Times—Wreck of the “Gabrielle”—Found Drowned
—“Mary’s”—The Graveyard by the Sea.

YI^HUS pleasantly and quietly passed the autumn and early winter. As, however, the latter season advanced, my life became more marked by incident. The high tide and gale of the January of that winter will long be remembered, not only at St. Olave's and along the neighbouring coast, but far inland also, on account of the sad loss of life which ensued. The high tide was accompanied by a furious gale from the north-west, which caused the raging sea to sweep far away to the south-east the bed of pebbles which the waves had themselves previously thrown up—a barrier against their own fury—at the foot of the cliffs. This pebble-bank once removed, nothing was left to resist the impetuosity of the tide. The huge curling waves rushed in with irresistible force, and undermined the cliffs of sand and clay, which, having no support left underneath, fell in vast masses into

the water, which became discoloured and turbid for a long distance from the shore. Fears were at one time entertained for the safety of the church, but, the tide turning, that noble monument of ancient piety was preserved to the village. Two cottages, however, which stood on the point of land called St. Olave's, or the Beacon Ness, were precipitated into the water, and that before the fishermen who inhabited them were able to remove their household goods.

Towards night the wind, which had slightly shifted its quarter, increased to a hurricane, and long brown blots and streamers of seething foam were driven over the church and village far inland. The sea raged with awful violence. Just when the sun, breaking for the first time that day through the hurrying storm-clouds, was casting his last lurid gleam of crimson light over the huge surges of black and dark-green and snowy-white, signal guns of distress were heard in the distance, and it soon became evident that a large full-rigged ship, which now drifted in sight round a headland to the northward, was about to run ashore. The sea was far too rough for any boat to live in, and accordingly the whole population, men, women, and children (myself amongst the number), who had hitherto been standing under walls and boat-houses gazing out wistfully on the surging waste of waters, were

fain to pass along the cliffs towards the probable scene of the approaching shipwreck. The men carried rockets and other appliances for getting a rope to the ship, but owing to the path along the cliff-edge having in many places fallen into the sea, and to the delay which consequently ensued, they arrived too late to be of any service. Too late, too late! The ship had struck on a sandbank near the shore, and speedily began to go to pieces amongst the boiling waves. It seemed that only two of the crew had survived the storm up to the moment of the last shock, and these were seen to be washed from the rigging without the possibility of rendering them any assistance. Next week's papers announced that "the fine ship, 'Gabrielle' of Sunderland, bound from the Stavanger Fjord to Great Yarmouth, had been lost near St. Olave's, Highcliff," and that "all hands had perished." Upon witnessing the catastrophe, most of the people mournfully returned home in the deepening twilight, and, as I was very tired, Cousin Bill carried me back part of the way on his shoulders. I could not sleep that night till near dawn, for my heart was sad for those who had perished, and for the friends who were praying for their safe return; and two or three times I rose and looked out on the wide waste of waters, over whose now allaying waves the stars gleamed fitfully from the breaking clouds, and at

length the thought struck me that, after all, those drowned men might be at rest—resting for ever and for ever from all their labours. Then I slept.

The next morning was bright and fine, and though the wind was still high, its fury had abated, and the sky and sea were of the deepest blue. But the shore, alas! was strewn with fragments of wrecks, and on the sand, two miles off, lay the shattered hull of the "Gabrielle." After breakfast, at which but few words were spoken, I joined a throng of lads who, as with one accord, walked along the beach to visit the remains of the luckless vessel. At one place, about half-way, a rude tent of sails had been erected, and a fire lighted under the low cliff, while an amphibious-looking personage in oil-skin coat and sou'-wester was preparing to sell by auction to dealers and jobbers, whose carts blocked up the neighbouring gangway, the relics of some previous wreck, or, as he described them, "these capital lots of planking, masts, ship-timbers, and bolts," for the Queen, as an old fisherman deigned to inform me—meaning, I suppose, for the Admiralty.

Arrived at the wreck of the "Gabrielle," we boys climbed up on the half-inverted hull, and it must have seemed strange to a thoughtful bystander to see the sports and to hear the merry laughter of childhood and youth upon and around that melancholy spectacle of fallen beauty and fallen pride.

On our return to St. Olave's, we saw a crowd gathered together on the beach hard by the village. Pushing through it, a sad sight met our eyes. Upon the sand lay, all stiff and cold, the lifeless body of a young sailor. His eyes were blue, and he had long flowing curls of light-brown hair. In his ears were small gold rings. A seaman's shirt of dark-blue worsted with open collar, and a pair of old red cloth trousers, were all that covered a form which in life must have been the very ideal of youthful beauty and grace and strength. This was the first time I had stood face to face with death, and I remained rooted to the ground with horror, when, hearing a thrilling voice cry, "Let me pass, for God's sake, let me pass!" I looked up, and there, through the crowd, which opened right and left, I saw my aunt, her white hair loose and waving in the wind. On she came, swift as a snow-drift before a storm, and then, throwing herself down upon the sand, she raised the youth's lifeless head upon her lap, and bent over it in paroxysms of weeping, her tears pouring down on the upturned dead face, and streaming over the sunny brown locks already wet with the briny water of the ocean. Deep grief, and especially the grief of the aged, is always impressive, and for long no one stirred or interrupted her sorrow. Then I heard an old woman say, "Ah! poor dear; sure enow, this day thirty years agone she lost her

poor lad Charley ;” and then I recollect that Cousin Bill had told me how that a brother of his father had fallen into loose company and bad ways, and had run away from home and gone to sea, and how that he was never heard of till one sixteenth of January, when his dead drowned body was washed ashore just opposite his own old home, where his father and mother had so long awaited his return, and had so constantly prayed that he might be guided back to the old hearth-home of their tender love, there to receive their forgiveness. And when I remembered this, I no longer wondered at my aunt’s sorrow at being thus so suddenly and so strangely reminded of the one deep, deep grief of her life. But now I saw Cousin Bill whisper a few words to some fishermen, who, when he had drawn his grandmother aside, raised the body of the dead youth and bore it to my uncle’s cottage, where they placed it in my room. That noon-tide my aunt prepared the beauteous body for burial, and, in so doing, found inside the woollen jersey a little leathern pocket-book, empty, save that in an inner pouch lay treasured up a paper containing a long dark tress of waving woman’s hair. On the paper was written, in rude, school-boy hand, “*Mary’s.*” And that was all—all that remained to identify the body—all that ever was known ! The jury at the inquest could, of course, only return a verdict of “Found

drowned,” and thus unknown, but not uncared for (for the whole population followed him to the grave, singing psalms as they went, after their beautiful country custom), the youth, of late so lovely and so brave, was borne to burial, far from his kindred and far from his love—from her whose parting gift had gone down with him into the deep, dark waters, and was finally laid with him in the earth upon his heart.

God grant that those two loving souls be together in Paradise, and on the morning of the Resurrection may rise to that place where all true love is perfected in the presence of Him who is Love Himself!

The old vicar of St. Olave’s marked the youth’s grave with a simple stone, inscribed—

“Here lies a young man found drowned.
Requiescat in Pace Xti.”

And there, on sunny afternoons, I would often repair alone to think on the sad scene I had witnessed, and I would pray (for Mother had taught me to pray often) that the friends and sweetheart of the dead boy might be comforted, and I could thank God that I had been so mercifully spared from a like fate.

It was a solemn yet soothing spot that old church-yard of St Olave’s. In its centre rose the old grey church, lichen-stained and weather-beaten, built of

squared flints and freestone, and varied here and there with tufts of three kinds of ferns, the *Ceterach Officinarum*, the *Adiantum Nigrum*, and the *Asplenium Ruta Muraria*. The tower, and lofty, cross-surmounted gables and high-pitched roof, served as a mark to the mariners toiling on the sea below. The porch was richly sculptured, and the two principal niches contained statues of Olaf, the old Scandinavian King and Saint, and of Edmund, the martyred King of East Anglia, with the sheaf of arrows in his hand and the guardian wolf couchant at his feet. All around the church were the graves of the village dead, but so large was the enclosure that they only occupied a small portion of it. But the tombstones were numerous, and their rude carvings of inverted boats told only too surely how frequent were the deaths from drowning on that dangerous coast. And yet, of the many of the strong and brave and loving who had perished at sea from St. Olave's, Highcliff, the bodies of scarce a tithe were ever recovered for burial in the parish graveyard. "The sea has gotten him"—this word, so often heard in the village, was only too true as regards the bodies as well as the lives of the drowned.

Nowhere, perhaps, could I enjoy Sundays so much as at St. Olave's. Then all the fishing-boats were either drawn up, as if to rest, upon the beach, or

rode merrily at anchor before the village, and the place was alive with their crews—tall, handsome, open-faced men and lads, whose blue eyes, long hair, exquisitely fresh complexion, and marked cheekbones, betrayed their kindred to the countrymen of King Olaf. And then their dress, too, was so wonderfully becoming and so picturesque, their dark-blue trousers and jerseys, and their snow-white braces crossing at the back. Oh, it was a treat to see that seafaring population wend up the hill to church, and exchanging greetings with the kind, old, ill-paid Vicar! How I loved that old white-haired priest, though I confess to occasionally going to sleep during his sermons. He had the faintest of kind, old voices, but he always raised it at the verse, “The sea is His, and He made it;” and then, whether calm or stormy, the ocean below (so at least it seemed to me) always sounded a deep and solemn “Amen.” And then the singing! Rude, indeed, it may have been, though the Vicar’s gentle daughter trained the choir; but singing more hearty and impassioned I never elsewhere heard, and with that also the great sea’s voice would always join in concert. After service, the fishermen, with their wives and little ones, and the fisher-lads, with their sweethearts or chums, used to stroll along the grassy, thrift-tufted cliff tops; but we boys instantly threw ourselves down the cliffs for a bathe in the sea when the

weather permitted, or otherwise for a rush along the beach. And there we used generally to find groups of country lads, in brown smock-frocks with leathern girdles, who on Sundays often strolled down to spend the afternoons on the shore, coming often from six or seven miles inland. These were bird-boys and shepherds, who worked from day-dawn to darkness all the week through without respite, and though employed in the morning, being thus robbed of half their due, the afternoon of Sundays was indeed a time of rest—rest and recreation for soul and body. The only pity is, that these poor lads were never encouraged to come to church at St. Olave's, and so to sanctify their innocent enjoyment. Sheepish lads these, we used to think, and shy withal, but, when we came to know them, full of heartiness and kindly feeling, shrewd in observation, and, moreover, like all Norfolk lads, of a pleasant wit.





CHAPTER VI.

The Fish-Cart—The Sea-Urchin—Bill and Ben—Moses in
the Bulrushes—The “Barley Mow”—Bill and Bessie—
Home—Little Samuel—Answered Prayer.

AT the beginning of February my Aunt Grimmer ^A had a letter from Mother, desiring that, as I was now quite well and strong, I should be sent home the following week. I was much taken aback by this news—indeed nothing but the longing I was beginning to feel to see Mother could have reconciled me to leaving St. Olave's. I anticipated, moreover, a most dismal journey in the carrier's cart, now that the heath was no longer in flower and the weather was so cold, especially as my old friend Richard Hutton now drove a coach in one of the “Sheres,” and his successor, a man of great age and crabbed temper, was the terror of all the small fry of St. Olave's. However, a few days before my departure, a friend of Cousin Bill's, who drove a fish-cart to Norwich, fell ill, and asked my cousin to take his

place. I don't suppose an attack of rheumatism ever caused so much pleasure either before or since. Bill was delighted at the thought of going to "The City," as Norfolk folks love to call their dear old capital, and I was well pleased at the prospect of having so agreeable a companion, especially as we were to travel by such an independent conveyance as a fish-cart.

The day before I left, I revisited as many of my old haunts as possible, and paid a vist to Ernsey Tower to say farewell to Dame Goodram. At parting, the old woman was more moved than I could have supposed it possible, and rewarded my attention with the gift of a splendid piece of amber. The morning of my departure, I was up long before it was light, that I might see and hear as much of the sea as possible before I started. And then I had an infinite number of shells and pebbles to pack up, and I had to wrap in netting a couple of codlings and a dozen red herrings which Uncle Grimmer desired me to give to Mother. After breakfast, my uncle and aunt affectionately bade me good-bye, and told me they should expect to see me in the summer, as sea air was reckoned "wonderful good" for the *voice*, laying great emphasis on the last word, why, I could not then imagine. Then, all being ready, I clambered up to the side of Cousin Bill, who was already perched on the top of the hampers with which the

fish-cart was loaded. One more minute, and I had lost sight of my kind uncle and aunt; ten more minutes, and I had lost sight of the sea, on which I had kept regretfully gazing; and then, but not before, I felt glad in my heart that I was going *home*.

It was a glorious, clear, frosty morning, and Cousin Bill, who was extremely smart, and wore a brand new pilot jacket and red silk handkerchief, was in rampant spirits. When we had gone about four miles on the road, on smacking his whip, a large sea-urchin shell, a rarity in those parts, fell out of his pocket into the road. I of course jumped down to pick it up, and I could not help wondering why the owner of this marine specimen turned so red when I asked innocently enough whom the shell was for, or why he answered so snappishly, "Why, for Mrs. Bunce of Mottlesham, to be sure; but what's that to you?" However, Cousin Bill soon recovered his temper, and we drove on swiftly and pleasantly enough until about noon we turned into the yard of the Barley Mow inn at Mottlesham. Here, to the surprise and delight of us both, stood, with his hands stuffed into his pockets, my red-faced steam-boat acquaintance, Ben West, who, as I think I mentioned, was an old companion of Cousin Bill's. At first this worthy, who had come up the river with a corn wherry, pretended not to know who I was, and then declared "that he was blessed if he didn't

take me for a sea-porpus, or for the Mayor of Mottlesham, I was looking so stout and hearty." And then he insisted on dragging us off to the market-place to see an itinerant peep-show, which he affirmed "beat all the gays in creation holler." While, however, he went to fetch his jacket, Cousin Bill slipped away, and, after keeping us waiting half-an-hour, came sneaking back, looking very sheepish, and declaring he had been looking for us, "oh, ever so long." Now, as we had not stirred from the spot ever since he left us, I felt convinced that this was a sheer invention, and Ben evidently thought so too, and said something in a low voice, to which Cousin Bill replied that he wished his friend might be "shivered," and became more enraged than I could have supposed it possible. I reflected, however, that perhaps travelling might not agree with his constitution, although, to be sure, he was generally hearty enough.

After the peep-show—at which I saw Moses in the bulrushes, the Battle of the Baltic—whereat the cannonade was represented by the vigorous shaking together of dry peas in a tin can, the murder of the Babes in the Wood, and the shipwreck of St. Paul, where that great apostle was wonderfully and miraculously supported in the water by grasping at a straw—we all three adjourned to the Barley Mow, where we were most hospitably regaled by Mrs. Bunce, the landlady, who was an old friend of Aunt Grimmer's,

and whose "native," she informed me, was St. Olave's, Highcliff. After dinner, Cousin Bill went out "to see if the cart and horse were right and tight-like," as he said, and presently I heard a kind of subdued shuffling in the passage, followed by a dead silence, and then the scuffling began again. I hope my eyes may have deceived me, but (though it is now many years ago) I have the strongest possible impression that I beheld, through the half-open door, Cousin Bill bestowing more kisses than one upon a young lady with red ribbons and of singular personal beauty, and bearing, moreover, such a striking resemblance to the buxom and still comely Mrs. Bunce, that I at once conjectured they were mother and daughter. I have a further conviction (though here again I trust I am mistaken) that the young lady in red ribbons, when the kissing had once fairly begun, didn't seem to mind it in the least, and that she even returned the last one, and this not at all as if she did so in agitation or absence of mind, but with a will, and as if she meant it. Certainly the door ought to have been shut, or I ought not to have been sitting exactly where I was, or Mrs. Bunce ought not to have been talking to Ben at the top of a very shrill voice; but the thing was as I have described it, and it cannot be helped now.

Immediately after this little scene, Cousin Bill re-entered the room, and said that the cart was

ready, and that I must bid Mrs. Bunce good-bye directly.

"But," said I, "Cousin Bill, you haven't given Mrs. Bunce the sea-urchin you brought her."

No sooner were these unlucky words out of my mouth than I saw that I had somehow committed myself, for Cousin Bill looked as black as thunder. But before he could speak, Mrs. Bunce cried out, "Why, bless the boy, what urchin?" So I was obliged to relate the circumstance of the shell dropping out upon the road, and the purpose for which Cousin Bill had said he designed it. At this juncture the young lady in red ribbons came tripping into the room, with the identical sea-urchin in her hand, and handing it to her mother, she declared that Bill ("Mr. William" she called him) had entrusted it to her for presentation. Mrs. Bunce immediately accepted the shell, avowing that "it made her feel all over like a sea-breeze," which, to say the least, was an uncommon effect to result from the acceptance of a marine curiosity. At this point Ben, after looking steadily into his friend's face, which plainly expressed his disgust at the unlooked-for transference of his present, had the vulgarity and want of proper feeling to burst into a loud roar of laughter. This was too much for my cousin's equanimity; he flung out of the room, dragged me after him to his perch on the top of the fish-hampers,

and dashed out of Mottlesham at a rate perilous to man and horse. At first I was terribly scared, and did not venture to break silence; but at last the failure of my cousin's little plan—which, child as I was, I saw through at once—struck me as being so intensely ridiculous, that I, in my turn, burst out laughing. Cousin Bill looked at me angrily for a moment, and then burst out laughing too, and declared, further, that “he'd been just served outright for not telling the truth;” and then he became confidential, and told me he was terribly in love with Bessie Bunce, and firmly meant to have their sybbrit* called before the next year was over.

Thus we pleasantly journeyed on, and at length we saw in the valley below us, and on the hills beyond, the many lights of Norwich twinkling through the darkness and winter fog. In half-an-hour more I was in Mother's arms. We walked home hand-in-hand from the fish market, close to which Cousin Bill put up, having first made him promise to come and take his supper with us at eight o'clock. I was far too happy to say much on the way, but I believe I felt the exceeding preciousness of being beloved. At length we reached home. A cheerful fire burned in the grate, and a tea-kettle stood simmering upon the hob. Mother's needlework, a smart little jacket

* In the Norfolk dialect, *Banns of Marriage*.

of black cloth, lay on the table, and near it her great Bible lay open. I looked into that old, well-worn volume, which had so long been a mine of comfort to my widowed mother, and I saw she had been reading in the place where it is related of Hannah that she brought her son Samuel a little coat every year, as he ministered before the Lord. That night, when I was safe and snug in my little early-familiar bed, with the dark-eyed lady in my picture looking down upon me, Mother came and kissed me, and whispered that her prayers were answered, and that I was to be a chorister.





CHAPTER VII.

The Music of the Past—Saturdays—Jim the Poacher—
Prisoners and Captives—Corky Joe—Funeral Rites and
Funeral Wrongs—Exploding Canons.

THE next morning, when I came down to breakfast,
I found Mother and Cousin Bill already seated
at breakfast over some of the red herrings sent by
Uncle Grimmer. When I joined them, Mother told
me that, about three weeks ago, the Canon of the
Cathedral, who had been so kind to us ever since
my disaster at Greenstaith, and whose household
linen was even then hanging out to dry on the rails
in front, had come into the house when she was
“all of a muddle,” and had told her that the Dean’s
butler had been discharged for misconduct, and
that, in consequence, his second son was not to be
appointed chorister. A vacancy having just occurred,
the Dean, at the Canon’s request, had offered the
place to me, provided that Dr. Belton, the Cathedral
Organist, thought sufficiently well of my voice to

pass me. Of course I was delighted at this news, regarding the post as even more honourable than that of a smuggler; but I soon began to take a desponding view of the matter, declaring that my voice would never suit. However, I was cheered up by Cousin Bill, and, being attired in my new jacket, I was conducted by Mother to the cloisters of the Cathedral wherein the choristers' school was situated. In a few minutes, Dr. Belton appeared. He was a short, spare man, but his head was square, massive, and rather bald. What hair he had was short, straight, jet-black, and wonderfully fine. His eyes were dark grey, and his face wore a sad and thoughtful expression. He seemed shy and awkward even before us. As he looked intently on me, I liked his face, but Mother afterwards said she thought he looked hard and stern. As his eyes remained fixed upon me, the bells began to chime for matins. I involuntarily raised my own eyes to the great central tower and spire, round which the daws were wheeling in airy circles, and for a time I forgot where I was, for the bells put me in mind of the voices of the bells which pealed over the sea at St. Olave's, and I was, as it were, entranced by their tones. Soon, however, I heard the organist's low voice near me: "Ah, Cloughton, already he loves music!"

"Do you love music, my boy?" he added.

"Yes, sir."

"And the music of the bells?"

"Yes, sir."

"You always did, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, but not so much as I do now."

"How is that, laddie?"

"They never before put me so much in mind of things at a distance, I think, sir."

"Very good, very good," said the Doctor, speaking as if to himself, and addressing no one. "The spirit of the bells, of all music, is with the past, with the absent, with the dead; of the present, it speaks never, never. But you'll be tired of waiting," he added, turning to Mother; "I won't keep your boy long, and if you'll wait here, I'll bring him back to you."

He was as good as his word. In half-an-hour I returned an enrolled probationer of the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity of Norwich.

And now a new life dawned upon me. I had to work hard, and, consequently, was very happy. The devil of idleness is the cruellest devil of all. Twice a-day I sang in the Cathedral; twice a-day, at the least, I practised music. Besides this, I attended the choristers' grammar school, which, though far from being as efficient as it might have been, was of a tolerably high character. I had already, for some years of my young life, been at

school, and I was really fond of learning, and now, though my work was much harder—for we were taught Latin—I made sufficient progress to please our meek little master, Mr. Orlando Moxon. My music I found much more difficult, but I loved it more than I had ever before dreamed of, and I strove with all my powers to sing well. And all my efforts were rewarded; for Dr. Belton, the reserved and recluse, praised me and interested himself in me, and that was sufficient. I loved that gentle, absent, dreamy, but richly-gifted man, and so, I believe, did we all—all my brother choristers I mean—but somehow, I suspect, I loved him better than they did. After evensong, our work for the day was commonly ended, and I could run home to Mother, though sometimes I had to return to sing at the evening parties of the Cathedral clergy and officials of the Close. And here, in their visitors, we boys were able to study our “betters” from behind a pianoforte as if from a watch-tower. I cannot say I enjoyed these evenings, or was much struck with admiration at the general run of the company I thus had the opportunity of inspecting. The unutterable dulness of the conversation on these occasions amazed me, while I was offended at the condescension of the ladies, who at these parties used to refer to us boys as “sweet little angels,” but always cut us dead when they met us in the

street the following day—a proceeding at which I suspect “the Elect Lady” to whom St. John wrote an Epistle would have been considerably taken aback. The parties of my benefactor, Canon Winstoop, however, were always exceptionally pleasant, for there a more genial spirit of Christianity prevailed, and we were received, not as hirelings and dependants, but as guests, and we were even forgiven when detected playing at hide-and-seek in the bedrooms, after it was believed we had gone home for the night. On Saturdays I would often wander by myself along the river-bank to Greenstaith, where I was always sure of a hearty welcome at the Fisherman’s Arms, or on the breezy heaths to the north-east of the city. Sometimes, too, we chorister boys would go fishing in the rivers up at Lakenham and Heigham, or down at Postwick Grove, getting a passage up or down in a coal or corn wherry; and glorious excursions these were!

Saturdays, however, were the greatest days for us boys when we remained in the city—there was so much stir and bustle, and so much to see. There was the picturesque Market Place, with its umbrella-stalls and crowded thoroughfares, overlooked by the noble Church of St. Peter Mancroft, the burial-place of Sir Thomas Browne, and by the quaint old Guildhall of freestone and black flints. And there was the chance of following some party

of country-men into the council-chamber of the Hall, with its stained glass windows, ancient fittings of dark oak, and stiff portraits of antique Mayors and Bishops. But these last were not the chief objects of attraction, for that room contains two glorious relics, and precious in the eyes of all true Norfolk men—the silver-hilted sword of the Spanish Admiral, presented to the city, with an autograph letter, by the grand old Norfolk hero, Horatio Nelson. Then there was the fish market, since swept away by the ruthless hands of modern aldermanic vandalism, which, with its overhanging roofs and overspreading awnings, I always thought must be like a bazaar at Cairo or Damascus. Oh, what a museum that fish market was! What wonderful fish, and fowls, and eggs I have seen therein! Pike of eighteen and twenty pounds from the Broads; grey herons from Herringfleet and Didlington; plovers of all sorts and kinds—brown, green, and golden; huge swans, pheasants, partridges, woodcocks, snipes, and ducks innumerable; the eggs of game birds for hatching; of plovers for the eating of those who know what is good, and of Scoulton “pies” of those who don’t. Then there were beautiful shells sold there, and fossils—some from the coprolite beds of the red crag in Suffolk, some from the cliffs of Cromer and Sheringham, and some brought by Norfolk fishermen from Whitby, when they returned

from their annual North Sea fishing. It was in that market that I first beheld a tortoise; it was there that I first saw a seal ("sea dog, my dear," said the fortunate owner, descriptively); it was there that I realised that leverets with two heads and eight legs are rather common than not.

But, after all, there was no place on Saturday market-days that, in point of interest, equalled "the Hill." It seemed to me as if the cattle of a thousand hills, and a thousand more besides, were collected upon that one spot every Saturday. How they were ever got there was a mystery only less unfathomable than how they were ever got away. Such noble stallions, led by grooms all leggings and ash sticks; such zebra-marked donkeys, led by dark-eyed gipsies, all sinews, red silk neck-ties, and velveteen jackets; such horned and black-faced sheep from West Norfolk; such enormous bullocks from every shire in England; such rushing and crushing and charging; such flights and pursuits and captures; such squealing of recalcitrant porkers; such neighing of stallions and baying of dogs; such cracking of cart-whips and whacking of refractory hogs; such meetings and greetings of friends; such crying of pies; such selling of cart-whips and leatherne gloves; such punching of cattle by appreciating farmers; such prodding and poking of the same by depreciating butchers; such stout old

graziers, in wonderful top-boots and impossible hats ; such handsome young farmers, with the yellow down of early manhood on their fresh, well-cut faces ; such general noise and excitement and confusion as were enough to turn the brain of a stranger ! and above and over all, towering up, square, massive, and silent, the huge Norman keep of the Castle. It used to be a great delight to us boys to retire from the throng for a few minutes to the broad gravel terrace which surrounds the Castle and commands a view of the whole city, and to listen till we flattered ourselves we could hear the rattling of the prisoners' chains within, although this I now believe to have been impossible. Once, when thus employed, we met with an adventure. A face suddenly appeared at a loophole high up in the wall—the pale, anxious face of a lad of sixteen or seventeen. The face gazed down on us fixedly for some time, then the lips moved, and a low thrilling voice moaned out, “Lads, swear you won’t call the beaks ; swear you won’t tell on me ! I’se trying to escape. I’se Jim the poacher. Oh, mother, mother !” There were four of us, and not one would have given the alarm for a hundred pounds. “Swear you won’t tell on me, and I’ll soon be free !” again moaned the voice ; and then, with a squeeze which marked the pale temples with blood, the head and shoulders of the prisoner emerged

from the narrow loophole. We all stood gazing upwards as if spell-bound. Then suddenly it rushed upon my mind that the lad meant to throw himself down, for I perceived he had no cord wherewith to lower himself. I tried to cry out, but my tongue was unable to utter a word.

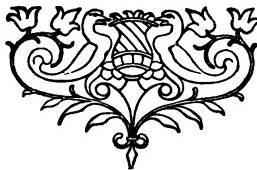
"Ho——h!" roared a gruff voice from within; "ho——h! would you?"

The gaoler had arrived in the nick of time to prevent the suicide of his prisoner! I think next day we all prayed heartily that Christ would show mercy "upon all prisoners and captives."

When I was first enrolled, we used to play at fives and marbles in the cloisters, but this, to our exceeding grief and indignation, was afterwards forbidden. The cause of the prohibition was this: One of our body, Frank Folgate by name, had a passion for enacting anything in the shape of a procession, in consequence of which foible we boys used to get up all kinds of ceremonials. Thus we laid innumerable first stones in the central grass-plot, and at one time or other buried the whole Chapter—chapter-clerks, vergers, and all—in effigy, in the great stone lavatory in the western arcade of the cloisters. We likewise, as of old did the boys of Sarum, installed one of our number, Joe Cornaby—"Corky Joe," as we called him—as Bishop of Porridge, which was the supposed capital of his

bishopric *in partibus*. One day, during the residence of a certain Canon, who had once been Vice-Chancellor of the University of —, we resolved to follow that dignitary, who was no favourite amongst us, to his last resting-place in the lavatory. It was to be a splendid interment—an unrivalled ceremonial. The fattest boy amongst us, Charley Stubbs, commonly called "Tubby," was accordingly wrapped in an infinite number of great-coats, over which was drawn the surplice of the stoutest lay-clerk. This bundle, duly placed upon a bier, was borne on the shoulders of four of our number, while the others preceded the animated corpse, bearing brooms and brushes, in imitation of the University "pokers," of which we had seen a picture in an old Cambridge almanack which hung in the vestry. Joe Cornaby marched last, singing alternately with the bearers and body (which *would* sing too) the most jubilant chant in the collection, and carrying aloft a banner inscribed with a not over-complimentary epitaph on the obnoxious dignitary. Never had we conducted a more impressive ceremony—never did procession proceed more triumphantly—so at least we were all thinking, when suddenly a side-door was flung open, and the very Canon whose fictitious remains we were about to inter stood in our midst, purple with rage, and uttering incoherent cries for the vergers. Down went brooms, down went

brushes, down went poor Charley Stubbs—and pretty hard did he go down too, spite of the grave-clothes—down went the banner (O, Corky one, where was your presence of mind ?), and away went we ! Next morning a special Chapter-meeting was held, at which the inscribed banner was produced in evidence of the outrage, and, amidst explosive shouts of laughter, the order was made that the cloisters should henceforward be a forbidden playing-place for the choristers. The insulted Canon tried hard to have us all flogged, but he tried in vain. For once, the reverend Chapter was too much amused to be severe.





CHAPTER VIII.

The Heath—Chorale of Mendelssohn—Stephen—Never a Friend—Little Brother—Confession—The Midsummer Tea-Gardens—Lower and Lower.

ONE summer Saturday afternoon, some two years and a-half after my enrolment, I was taking a solitary stroll on the heath I have already mentioned, when a strange incident befel me. I had just entered a remote ravine, the remains apparently of a disused gravel-pit, whose sloping sides were clothed with heath and furze, when I heard a deep voice singing a chorale of Mendelssohn's which was often performed in the Cathedral. I thought I recognised the voice, and silently approaching the place whence the sound issued, I suddenly beheld, kneeling on the ground in a little hollow, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, Stephen Hartley, a young singing-man of the choir. His was a strange and striking figure. He was tall and very slight. His fair hair, which he wore long, was very fine and straight. His face was

deadly white, his eyes large, strangely bright, and dark as a gipsy's. He had a glorious voice, and it was said that that alone had saved him from expulsion from the choir on more than one occasion. Once, after being reproved by the Precentor for his irregularities, he flung away, declaring he would never sing again—no, not if he starved first. It was said, too, that Dr. Belton, who alone ever seemed to take his part, had tried to soothe him, and that at last, as a kind of favour, he had allowed himself to be persuaded to remain. Such was Stephen Hartley. Heretofore, I had only known him, seemingly reckless indeed, but cold, proud, sarcastic, unapproachable, and although, from a kind of instinctive attraction I felt towards him, I had tried to engage his notice, I had always found it impossible to do so. Now, his whole manner was utterly changed. It is true, he was singing grandly, but every now and then his rich voice was choked with emotion, and his dark eyes were streaming with tears. I now repented having advanced so far, and was about to attempt to retire unperceived, when he suddenly saw me, and, starting up, flew towards me. Then, throwing himself down on the ground beside me, he implored me never to mention what I had seen. This of course I promised readily enough, and then I made bold to ask what had so grieved him. I suppose the tone of my voice betrayed the sympathy

I was feeling ; at all events, I saw that he tried to put on his old, stern, frigid look, but he tried in vain. I saw his face working with intense feeling, and then he again burst into tears.

“ Oh ! ” he cried, “ what is there but grief here ? What respite from sorrow ? What respite have I ever, even for an hour together, save perhaps in music, and then it comes on worse again than ever ? And I have no friend in this world ; none in the next. Oh, it is terrible ! ”

“ Yes,” I said, “ surely Dr. Belton is your friend ; and though I am only a boy, I wish I was your friend too, if only you ’d let me.”

He looked at me earnestly. “ Yes, Belton is my friend—that is to say, he likes my voice, and would be sorry for me to leave the choir ; I do him credit there. Friend, indeed ! But maybe he does like me better than others do. If he knew *all*, though, where would his friendship be then ? Oh, Julian,” he added presently, “ if only I had a young brother like you to love, and to love me, how different I should feel ! ”

I could not see how that should be, but I answered, “ But I *will* be your brother, if you will only let me. Pray, Mr. Hartley, don’t despise me because I am only a lad. Indeed, indeed I feel to like you. I always knew I should, if you would only have let me talk to you and be with you ; but you

always——.” I stopped, but he supplied what I dared not utter.

“I always repelled you. Yes, and not you alone, but everyone who had a spark of goodness or truth ; but, Julian” (and here he gently stroked my hair), “if in truth you mean what you say—if you, boy though you be, will indeed be my friend, and faithful and true to me—I think I may have some hope, and that’s what has long since faded from me. But you must be honest with me. You will try to lead me right, won’t you, laddie ?”

Oh, how earnestly he looked up into my face as he spoke these words ! and oh, how plaintively he spoke them !

It was strange to see that wild-looking, tall, young man, with his dark, flashing eyes half-full of tears, and with his long pale hair falling about his white face, kneeling to a boy like me, and eagerly appealing to him. And so, indeed, I felt it. It is perhaps a wonder I did not feel frightened ; but, on the contrary, I was quite calm. I knew, though I knew not why, that, young as I was, a soul was looking to me for help and comfort, and I felt an inward sense that, at least in part, it was in my power to give him the aid he sought. I therefore answered, “Yes, Mr. Hartley, I will be true to you, and honest ; but you will tell me why you are so much grieved, won’t you ?”

He took my hand in his. Oh, how thin and hot it felt! And then he made reply, "Yes, Julian, I *will* trust to you, who are young and innocent. I *will* tell you all. And, remember, henceforward we are brothers; so, Julian, you must henceforth call me Stephen. But come," he continued; "the air in this hollow is choking; let us sit on the top of the hill and talk together there, and you shall know all."

We ascended the hill, and sat on the summit amidst the short heather. Neither of us spoke at first, but we silently gazed on the view before us, which was gleaming under the warm summer sky and afternoon sun. Very beautiful it was. Straight before us from out the valley rose the huge grey pile of the Cathedral, with its vast central spire contrasting gloriously with the green trees in the Bishop's garden and the Close, from which the old prebendal buildings peered forth, with their embattled gables and great stacks of twisted chimneys. Beyond, on all sides, on a cluster of hills (said, like those of Rome, to be seven), the red-tiled dwellings of the city were tumbled about, and from amongst them rose many a stately church and noble tower. In fact, no less than some twenty-nine of the six-and-thirty churches of Norwich were visible from the spot whereon we sat. In the centre of the city, on its own commanding hill, stood the massive Norman keep of the Castle, girdled with

orchards and plots of flowers, and by the yellow-gravelled terrace and the wide expanse of the cattle market. Immediately below us flowed the silent river, flecked with passing wherries, whose black and red sails contrasted with the snowy canvas and gay streamers of the numerous pleasure-boats. Farther down stream, a few sea-going vessels with one and two masts were moored at the wharfs, and near them lay motionless upon the water the steam-packet I had cause to know so well. Beyond the city rose low, long-swathed hills covered with yellowing grain, and a richly-wooded district extending into the far distance and wrapped in purple haze closed the prospect. Above our heads skylarks were singing "at heaven's gate," while, from below, the lazy breeze wafted fitfully to our ears the distant hum and crash of the busy city and its crowded mart—the sound of the surging of the restless sea of life that beat for ever within its crowded walls. At times, too, the distant tolling of a church bell broke upon our ears, and, speaking of the flight of a brother's soul to the shadow-land of the intermediate state, added solemnity to a scene so lovely and otherwise so cheerful. Such was the view on which we long gazed in silence. Then Stephen, pointing to the city, spoke in deep and thrilling tones :—

" Julian, there, yonder, lie buried all the bright

hopes of my youth, all the deep longings of my manhood. Strange that so foul a place should look so fair! I *think*—but God only knows—I *think* if I had been brought up somewhere deep in the country, or by the lonely sea-side, I might have been different; but, as it is, yonder city has been my ruin, and is my ruin still. Julian, I have at times restless yearnings after better things and higher, but they die away, and I go after worse things and practise them, and wallow like a hog in lower. I'm in this dreadful state: although sometimes I think I don't love evil as evil, I have strength to do nothing else, and at the present I feel I love nothing and care for nothing that is good!"

"Oh, Stephen," I interrupted, "surely you love music."

"Love music!" he answered. "Yes, I *do* love it. It touches my heart; it fills my soul; it is to me as the love of woman, but like that——." His voice failed here, but presently he continued, "But why should I speak of them? I suppose they are all alike heartless, as *she* was. Oh! if *she* had only remained faithful, all might be different; but as it is——." He paused again here, and then went on, "Julian, music has ruined me, soul and body; and yet not music either, but the devil; and from what I say, you may take warning yourself. Often, when I

sing in the Cathedral, my heart is fit to burst with joy and grief and shame. When, I dare say, all of them think me so calm and cold, my heart often seems on fire, and is almost rent in twain. Julian, Mendelssohn's and Handel's music is to me like the voice of God Himself calling me to repentance and hope and joy, and to a higher and nobler life; and then, again, it only seems to make the bitterness of my heart more bitter still. But don't think I was always thus. When I was first appointed lay-clerk—I was but seventeen then—I was happy enough and comparatively innocent. Well, I was carried away by music. I studied it day and night. I threw all my powers into my work, and I gained my end; I sang well—better, indeed, than any of my mates. My voice developed wonderfully for one so young, and, as you know, I soon became the pride of the choir. Proud I was not myself—I loved my art far too well for that—but others took pride in me, and I was often sickened at the ignorant praises I received at the parsons' evening parties. Perhaps, though, that may have partly been because the bigwigs I saw there always took care to show that they felt it a condescension to praise a chap in my station at all, and seemed to wonder that excellence in any line should be found out of their own class. They were glad enough to have me at their parties because I could sing well, but for no other reason, and at no other

time. Such as I, Julian, and such as you, are 'dearly beloved brethren' in church, but nowhere else. Even between the lowest minor-canonical and the best singing-man there's a gulf fixed, and it's the exception when it is not so. And if this is bad in the church, it's fifty times worse amongst the dissenters, as well I know, for my father at one time was an Independent. Brotherhood, Julian, is out of date now ; more's the pity ! But enough of this.

"Soon after I was nineteen my father died. My mother, who they say died in giving me birth—would that I had died with her!—I never saw. What her name was I do not know, for my father never mentioned either it or where she came from, though I think it was from somewhere beyond Mottleshaw. My father, I know, before I was born, used to live at Mottleshaw, but he could never bear to speak of the place, and the mere mention of my mother used to drive him almost mad with rage. I had a notion he had used her cruelly, and I sometimes think I am a bastard, and that my mother must have been—. But after all, I needn't speak of her : God rest her, whatever she was ! My father was an organist and pianoforte tuner, and during the latter part of his life was very deaf and cross ; but, on the whole, I lived with him happily enough. When, however, he died, all things were changed. He left me nothing, and I had then no home, and

had to take lodgings for myself. And now my music became more important to me than ever, and I devoted myself to it even more closely than before. I hadn't done growing then, and I soon overdid myself with work, and fell ill, very ill, and for two whole months couldn't enter the Cathedral. What with doctors and doctors' stuff, I soon fell into difficulties, and got into debt. Like a fool, I lodged at a public-house; my landlord had lent me some money, and I owed him some besides for board and lodging. He became urgent for the money, and I couldn't pay him. How long more I should be laid up ill I didn't know. I was almost in despair, for I was too proud to speak of my private affairs, or to borrow money of any of my acquaintances. I was threatened with legal proceedings if I didn't pay by a certain day. The day came, and with it fears of a debtor's prison, and then it rushed upon my mind that if it should ever transpire that I had been in jail I should be expelled from the choir. Then it was that my landlord entered the room. I remember I was lying on the bed weak from pain and want of sleep. He began by asking whether I was prepared 'to pay up like a man.' I told him I had nothing, and begged him to wait another two months, by which time I hoped to be back in the Cathedral. On this he went out, as he said, to turn the matter over in his mind, and then, coming back, he told me

that a plan had just struck him which would at once relieve me from my difficulties. He offered, in short, to forgive me my debt, and to lodge me rent-free, if I would bind myself by a written agreement to sing three nights a-week at the Rotunda in the 'Mid-summer Tea-Gardens,' and would, moreover, engage to sing twice weekly at the new 'Free-and-Easy Singing Saloon,' which he was going to open the following autumn. I was to have a monthly salary, and 'lush and grub free, gratis, for nothing.' My landlord ended his proposal by stipulating that the songs should be exclusively selected by himself, 'for,' said he, 'whatsumever I undertakes, I likes to see done decent and credible.'

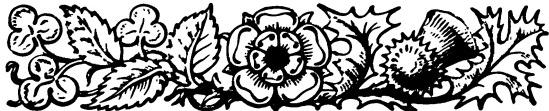
"I have no doubt now that the whole was a preconcerted plan, but then I was too ill, or thought myself so, to contest any point, and I was, moreover, blinded by fear of a jail. Accordingly, I caught eagerly at the offer, and signed the agreement, which my landlord, who had plainly made sure of me beforehand, produced from his pocket all ready drawn up. Well, Julian, after this I soon got well, and went back to the Cathedral. At nights I had to practice *such* songs; but the worst did not come that summer. At the Gardens it was my part to sing the 'sentimental' pieces, as they were called; and though I was thrown into much indifferent company, I don't think I then took much harm.

In the autumn, however, the man who was to have sung the comic songs got a better situation, and my landlord—my master, I should rather call him—insisted on my taking his place. So almost nightly I went to that cursed place. Julian, you can't imagine the utter blackguardism and beastly drunkenness I saw there, or the filthy and horrible language that I heard. Old, often grey-headed men used to resort to the saloon—men with wives and families, men of weight in vestries and municipal committees and Protestant meetings, men of what they call ‘the *respectable* classes,’ as if respectability was a matter of broad-cloth coats, big bellies, red noses, and gold watch-chains ; young men, too, and lads of the better class of artisans, and apprentices and assistants in shops, came there in swarms (poor fellows ! what place of innocent amusement was open to them ?), and there was always a crowd of loose girls. O God, Julian !”—he said this with deep earnestness —“ wouldn’t it be well if the Cathedral gentlemen, the parsons, I mean, would try to devise some decent and rational amusements for the young men of the city, instead of sending out hundreds of thousands of pounds to convert the Jews or Irish, or to sow Bibles and scatter tracts broadcast all over the world, without ever a missionary to teach the poor feckless creatures how to use them ? But hear my part in all this evil. I,

whose voice had before been only raised to sing God's praises, now sang songs which no right-thinking man could hear without blushing. At first I was very much shocked, and even had self-respect enough left to remonstrate with my master ; but he only pulled out my written agreement to sing whatever songs he chose, and told me to do just as I liked, for I knew the alternative, and then I yielded. But I soon went from bad to worse, Julian. I grew more and more hardened. Little by little I began to take delight in the debauches at which I was forced to be present, and I composed songs myself, which gained the more applause from the customers in the room, as they were perhaps more gross than any others. So time passed on, but I could not feel easy long. Light, indeed, seemed to dawn on me at times, but my life soon darkened over again. I began to hate the Bible, and to wish it was all a lie, because it condemned my way of life. I think I should have altogether become an infidel if I had not clung to my post as singing-man ; but what devilish wickedness and hypocrisy there is in that ! Once, indeed (for now I could earn plenty of brass if I lost my place in the Cathedral), I was blown up at Chapter-meeting for irregular attendance ; how could I attend regularly after such scenes as I saw at nights, and when every syllable I heard of God's Word seemed to cut me to the heart ?—and I told

them I didn't care whether they gave me the sack or not. But somehow I let Belton persuade me to remain, for I really felt that was my only chance. And so I go on, Julian ; I was at the Gardens two nights ago, and I shall be there again to-night. Oh ! what hope have I, little brother ? How can I break the chains which bind me to that man, and to that course of life which I love now—yes, *love* as my life, Julian, while yet I hate it. Sometimes I think of bolting, of running away into the country, and trying to begin life afresh there ; but I have strength and resolution for nothing. If I had only a relation to go to ! But my father had no relations, and my mother's, even if they exist, and I knew where to find them, would most likely cast me off. The world, little as I have seen of it, is, I know, always ready to visit the sins of the mother upon the children. Would that I could think there was no sin and shame on the part of *my* mother !"

Stephen's voice became choked with emotion at this point, but he presently added, "Oh ! advise me truly, little brother, and help me, for indeed I need your help."



CHAPTER IX.

Stole Away—The Left Letter—The Gipsy—Sunday in the Country—The Mournful Past—Seeking the Lost—Hidden Sympathies.

SUCH were Stephen's words, such his sad confession, and even now I seem to hear it ringing in my ears. When he ceased speaking, he threw himself flat on the ground, weeping as passionately and bitterly as before. I felt very much astonished at this great, sad confidence, and very, very sorry; but I was so young and so wanting in experience, I scarce knew what to say, much less what to advise. Presently, from below, the wind brought up the sweet sounds of the Cathedral bells chiming for evensong. I looked round, and as the afternoon sun lit up the pale face and delicate, finely-cut features of the young but fallen man, I could not help thinking that the young, drowned sailor-lad, lying with his true love's tress upon his cold breast beneath the churchyard sod at St. Olave's, was less

to be pitied than he. Then I knelt down, and, putting one arm round Stephen's shoulder, I said, now that I was his brother, he must listen to me without offence. And then I implored him to pray to God in church (for we had to return for even-song) to show him a way out of his troubles; and I entreated him, come what might, to give up his other engagement. Stephen answered not, save that once he muttered, "Like *her!* like *her!*" Then I felt his hot lips press my forehead, and then, taking my hand in his, we wended back in silence to Norwich. Whether he prayed for himself at that service I know not, but I lifted up my heart for him in earnest prayer.

For some time after this, Stephen seemed rather to avoid me, though, when we were thrown together, he always spoke affectionately enough. Once I ventured to ask him whether he had left off singing at the Gardens. I saw his lips quiver and his eyes fill with tears. Then he seized my hand and pressed it, but no word escaped him, and presently making a hurried excuse, he turned away. A few days afterwards his place in the choir was empty, and then I heard a rumour that Stephen Hartley had disappeared—where, no one knew. In great anxiety, I went to the public-house where he had lodged. The landlord, the cause of so much evil, was absent, but I learned from a lad in shirt sleeves, who was

setting up skittles in the alley and then knocking them down again for his own amusement, that Stephen had not returned as usual the previous evening, and that he had not since been heard of. In his room had been found a parcel addressed to Julian Cloughton. I explained who I was, and received the package, which contained a few music books and a note.

"Brother," ran this last, "I thank you for all your kindness and love, though I feel unworthy of it. Your question last week went to my heart, with your kind way of asking it. When I left you that day, I went to say good-bye to a young man, a companion of mine in many a sinful act, who was going away to London. 'Good-bye, old lad!' said I when we parted; 'when shall we meet again?' 'God knows,' he answered; 'maybe not till the Day of Judgment!' Julian, that word stuck by me. *I* had first led him into sins which are now a part of his life itself. Isn't it horrible to think of our next meeting—of his cursing me, who loved him, before all peoples as his destroyer? When you get this I shall be far away. I have resolved to escape from this place: would that I could escape from myself! Where I shall go I don't know; perhaps I shall die soon, and amongst strangers. Pray for me, brother. I think, if I was dying, I should like to have my hand in yours, and your face looking into

mine. The books I leave behind are all for you. I shall leave a few papers and things about, which I have no time to put in order. Look at them; some of them may show you I am not, or rather *was* not, wholly bad. Somehow I could not bear *you* should think me so, Julian. Take them, my dear boy, and keep them in memory of your poor brother, who loved you more than you know or think. ‘The devils believe and tremble!’ Some one spoke that word in the Cathedral last Sunday. I have believed, but have *not* trembled; so I am doubly condemned. But I tremble now. God in Heaven bless you, laddie. You see I dare pray for you, but not for myself—I am past that now. Now good-bye. This, perhaps, is the last you will ever hear of your poor brother, Stephen Hartley; but, believe me, I thank you a million times for your true and disinterested love, the remembrance of which will, if anything can, shed a gleam of light over the dark track of my future life. Farewell.”

While I was reading this affecting letter, the landlord returned. I showed him the passage in Stephen’s letter wherein he desired me to appropriate what he had left behind. Although enraged at what he called “Stef Hartley’s ingratitude, after all he’d been and done for him,” he could not dispute my right, and accordingly gave me leave to search

his empty bedroom. There was not much—only some volumes of books, MSS., and a few clothes. Wrapping them together, I came down. The landlord—a large, smug man, sleek and oily, with double chin, close-trimmed black whiskers, and “Charley”—met me at the foot of the stairs. “If yer wanted,” said he, “to see a little life, I’m the gentleman to put yer in the way of it, and of making a jolly lot of tin into the bargain. I know yer, bor, for I’ve heer’d you, so you’ve nowt to do but to say the word, and I don’t doubt but what I could put yer in that fool’s shoes at the s’loon this autumn—fine larks there, I promise yer!”

With the book of poor Stephen’s troubles open before me, I had no wish to “see the life” which had led him into temptation and misery, and I turned away without answering. The landlord called after me—“There, now, don’t take offence, bor; think on’t, for I’m in no hurry for an answer. Why should I hurry another body’s cattle, I’d like to know? What’s use of being a buster? says I. Take your time, lad, and if in one or two years hence yer thinks better of it, why, come and say so. But oh, what a rum feller that there Hartley wor, to cut and run so sudden and ungrateful like! I’m thinking he’s off his nut kinder, more by token as he left a month’s rent in advance behind him. Soft trick that, worn’t it? And then one o’ them

flarenecking gipsy mauthers to come running after him when he was gone and all! Some plant that, I 'spects!"

"Gipsy!" said I, astonished; "what gipsy?"

"Why," answered the host, "this morning who should turn up but a young gipsy-wench in a red cloak and black hat and feather; fine-looking, strapping gal, too—make a sen-sation in the orchester in s'loon, I'll be bound. I see her a-talking with Jim there in the skittle-ground fust; but he knew nowt, 'twaun't likely; and then she come up, bold as brass, and ask me where Stephen Hartley wor. I told her I 'pected she knew better nor I did by half; but she took her solemn she didn't, and had counted to find him here. 'Well,' says I, 'well, my dear, you'll find fifty chaps as good as him and better any day o' the week; and would you b'lieve it, the gal bust out right a-crying, and blubbered fit to multrate the very cobble stones in t' yard; so I packed her off there and then, and there was an end o' that!"

As I walked home, I wondered who this gipsy girl could be, who alone took an interest in poor Stephen, and I remembered the words which had escaped him about the faithfulness of one he had loved. On the following Saturday I took the papers I had found in Stephen's room, and, sitting on the hill where our acquaintance had so strangely begun, I untied bundle after bundle. The papers contained

various fragments of writing, both in prose and verse, and to some of them dates were affixed. It was sad to contrast the earlier and later pieces—the solemn yet hopeful tone of many of the former, and the wearing away of hope to its extinction in the latter. In several he gave expression to an earnest longing to discover the relations and family of his mother. Several were inscribed, “To Rachel.” From various allusions, I could scarcely doubt that this Rachel was the gipsy girl who had been to search for him when it was already too late, on account of his sudden disappearance. Others of Stephen’s productions were on musical and general subjects, and though I could ill appreciate them at the time, I can now trace in them the marks of a promising disposition. Of the poetical pieces I subjoin two, as indicative of the writer’s frame of mind at two different periods. The first was endorsed, “Written on my seventeenth birthday.”

SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

A deep and solemn silence broodeth over sea and land,
Only broken by the breakers breaking on the distant
strand,

Or by the bleating of the flocks upon the long-ridged hills,
Or by the eternal tinkle of the seaward-wending rills.

The horses of the farms graze in the meadows by the
stream, [the sunlight gleam ;
The black rooks crowd the smooth-shorn lawns, and in

At anchor all the fishing-boats rock idly on the bay,
For they the salt-sea surges shall never plough to-day.

Hark ! when the breeze sweeps nearer, the cheerful sound
of bells
From half-a-hundred hamlets in the inland valley swells ;
Then comes a lull—breathe softly, winds, breathe silently,
for there
In yon deep vale the hamlets kneel to raise their God-
ward prayer.

And toil-worn men meet yonder, their Godward praise to
speak [week,
For the hours most dear and peaceful of all the weary
For the day of happiest freedom in the toilsome round of
seven,
For the best resting-place from toil on this earth's side
of heaven.

Hark ! from each scatter'd hamlet rises a merry noise—
The ringing laugh of childhood, of merry girls and boys,
From many a sunward-sloping croft, from many a
shadowy lane, [ing grain.
Deep-lying in betwixt wide fields of wind-waved yellow-

From many a glen the voices rise, borne on the breeze
to me,
Dreamily-listening as I lie upon the hill-side wild and
free ;
For, for a space too brief, I have outwended from the town,
Exchanging smoke and blackness for the gorse-clad, airy
down.

And my toil-dimm'd eyes grow brighter as I gaze upon
the sea,
And my toil-worn limbs grow lighter as the sun shines
over me, [and men
And my heavy heart grows warmer with love to God
As those sweet sounds rise up upon the breeze each now
and then.

Back must I wend at eventide to seek my squalid home,
Six days of weary work must pass ere I again may roam !
Yet from the great city's heart my praise shall rise to
heaven
For the good gift to working-men of one day's rest in
seven.

The second which I will quote was written shortly before my first interview with Stephen on the heath.

“ Over my soul dim shadows roll—
Shadows of things long past ;
For me no more the springtide hour—
My life is overcast.
Doubtingly gazes my spirit onward,
Mournfully, mournfully gazes it back ;
And oh ! for a rest for my weary heart,
For a guide o'er the wastes of my perilous track.
Nothing behind but miscall'd pleasure,
Scarcely enjoy'd in a reckless youth ;
Nothing behind but a full-heap'd measure
Of falsehood hid in the guise of truth !
In the sands of the past one green oasis,
But the storm-winds blew, and it wither'd away ;

To my longing eyes one glimpse of blue heaven,
But the clouds closed round, and darken'd my day !
Nothing before—but the weight of my weakness
Bears me down in the dust of the present hour ;
Enough ! of the present the ill sufficeth ;
Enough ! o'er the present dark storm-clouds lour !”

And here it strikes me to express my belief that a great many good folks will be disposed to say, when they read the sad confession of Stephen Hartley, “What a foolish and wicked young man that was ! There he was attached to a Cathedral Church, and surrounded by the clergy ; why did he not go to them for advice and help and ghostly counsel ?” And I answer, that *would* indeed have been his better course. But, good people, know this, that at that time the English clergy gave little encouragement to those who desired to “open their grief.” Know, too, that it is very hard to find a young man of my class who is ready to go to and confide in those whom he has been taught to regard, not as fathers in God, accessible by the very terms of their commission to all, but as his “betters ;” and, as poor Stephen himself observed, between a Cathedral dignitary and a singing-man there is a great gulf fixed. God only knows how many penitents have been repelled by the sense that they would have to encounter a sniggering footman in yellow plush, or a smug butler with the

airs of a retired prelate! If the Cathedral clergy had interested themselves in the spiritual and social welfare of the Cathedral "underlings" by friendly personal intercourse, they would have been met in a like spirit; but this, as a rule, they did *not* do. Further, good people, is it not the duty of the clergy to *seek* those that are astray? This the Master did, in Whose Name and by Whose commission they minister.

Perhaps, too, my connection and friendship with Stephen Hartley may to some appear strange and unnatural. I, who am what De Quincey calls "a Catholic creature"—one who "at no time of my life have been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape"—cannot think that it was so. No one can define what hidden affinities and sympathies exist between soul and soul—what the causes of deep friendships and deep love between man and man, or between man and woman. These secret bonds of union and motives of attraction defy research. Who shall say *why* it was that the soul of Jonathan was knit unto David with a love passing the love of woman more than to any other of the ruddy striplings of Israel? As little can men tell those hidden bonds as I, at that time, could guess that I well knew the only relative that Stephen Hartley possessed in the world!



CHAPTER X.

Three Years—The Mastodon—Ulla Borgen—Oysters and Porter—I see the Worst—Dead!

OF the three years which followed on the events just detailed I have little to record. During that period I made great progress (for me at least) in musical and general knowledge. Amongst the books left for me by Stephen was an old copy of Spenser's "Faëry Queen," printed by Matthew Lownes, A.D. 1613; the "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Browne, and two or three of Sir Walter Scott's novels, including the "Pirate." These, and especially the last, were to me a mine of delight. Dr. Belton, too, always kind and considerate, used to lend me books of history, geography, and travels, as well as many of the English Poets. Little by little, moreover, I began to study geology, towards which science my residence at St. Olave's had given me a leaning. The neighbourhood of Norwich is rich in fossils, which I used to gather at spare times and on

half-holidays, and form into little collections for sale. By this means, and by the kindness of Canon Winwood, who used to dispose of them amongst his scientific friends in the University, I was enabled to raise what seemed to me a considerable sum of money. This I commonly spent in books ; but once a fine specimen of the tooth of the *Mastodon Augustidens*, which I discovered in a gravel-pit at Surlingham, produced a warm winter cloak for my mother, and a glorious entertainment for myself and six chorister friends at the dear old Fisherman's Arms at Greenstaith. Sometimes in summer I used to accompany a friend of Canon Winwood's, who was Professor of Geology at the University of—, to the crag-pits and chalk-pits at Thorpe and Bramerton, and other places near the city. These excursions were of the utmost use in opening and educating my mind, and, in addition, were productive of the utmost pleasure ; for the Professor did not disdain to afford all the information in his power to all, however humble or ignorant, who sought it. His manner of instruction was most graphic and lively, and he increased my sense of gratitude, while he tried to lessen it, by declaring that the local knowledge I had gained of the likeliest spots for fossils was as valuable to him as anything he could offer in return.

At the end of the third year after Stephen's

sudden disappearance, during which time no tidings were heard of him, save that some one (whom no one believed) reported he had seen him grinding a barrel-organ before the gate of Peter House at Cambridge, an event occurred which made a great sensation at Norwich. Two concerts were announced, at which a songstress was to appear for the first time in the city, whose spotless purity of life and sweetness of disposition were as remarkable as her consummate musical talents and marvellous voice. The citizens of Norwich were, and still continue to be, passionately fond of music; and the choral festivals, held, alas! in the desecrated Church of St. Andrew, are amongst the most celebrated in the kingdom. Popular expectation had reached its highest pitch when, about a week before the concert, it was found that the great songstress, Ulla Borgen, had arrived at the Palace as a guest of the Bishop. Strange that this hospitable act and public recognition of purity and sterling worth, on the part of a Christian Bishop, should have been met by such canting cries of condemnation, and should have been so blackened and maligned, and that by men who, spite of their microscopically narrow minds and Pharisaic exclusiveness, would fain have arrogated to themselves the name of "Evangelical," to the exclusion of their more genial and larger-hearted brethren!

On the morning but one before the great vocalist's

arrival, Dr. Belton called me to come and speak with him.

"Julian," he said, "Ladbrooke, who was to sing with Miss Borgen, has been taken ill with a quinsey; you will sing with her instead. It is a great honour, but I know you will do your best and succeed. But you must make the best use of the short time which is left you for preparation."

I was fairly overwhelmed by this intelligence, but at length I said, "Oh, sir! I can't, and daren't sing with Miss Borgen."

"Perhaps I am the best judge whether you can or not," answered the Doctor, "and had I not been well assured of that, I should not have proposed you to the committee; but sing you must now, if only for your good mother's sake."

"For my mother's sake, sir?"

"Yes, of course; the committee will pay you handsomely; and though I know that the honour of singing with Miss Borgen would be sufficient reward for any one of my boys, you will accept the remuneration offered for the sake of your good mother: meanwhile, here is something to begin with, which I am sure she will like."

So saying, my good master hurried away, leaving in my hand a ticket of admission for the second of the coming concerts. Next day there was a meeting to make final arrangements and a part rehearsal. I

was not present until everyone else had gone, when Dr. Belton came out and cried, "Quick, Julian, go in; Miss Borgen is waiting for you."

I entered hesitatingly, and found myself in the presence of the great singer. She was a mere girl; rather tall, not beautiful, scarcely even pretty. Her eyes were blue, like those of her Scandinavian countrymen, and she wore her light hair wreathed back from her fair forehead. Miss Borgen rose as I entered, and stretched out a white hand. "We must be friends," she said in a foreign accent, "for we are to sing together."

Oh, how her young face lighted up! What sweetness of expression! What quiet radiance of look! What deep, true, unmistakable goodness beamed forth from her face as she spoke!

"You are very kind, madam," I said; "but I dread the concert, and am so afraid I shall sing badly, or break down altogether."

"Ah!" she replied. "So it was with me at first. I thought I had sunk through the floor into the earth, but God did give me strength, and the wish to help others kept me up: and have not you others for whose sake you should strive and conquer?"

"Yes, indeed; my dear mother."

"Ah! you are good," said the songstress. "I knew we should be friends, and I will help you through, all I may; but, mind, you are to call me Ulla."

"No, madam, I shall never be able to do that."

"But you will do me pleasure, if you will. Does not our art make us brothers and sisters? And what may I call you?"

"Julian," I answered.

"Ah! Julian, I call to mind. My good friend, Dr. Belton, did tell me before. But now we must begin."

The first concert went off magnificently. Ulla Borgen was conducted to her place by the Mayor, in his gold chain of office, and was greeted with rapturous applause, the old snowy-haired Bishop rising as his guest entered—an action whereat many Pharisees groaned audibly. I watched the girl when her turn came to sing. She stood a moment, looking downcast, even dull, though I could see her bosom heaving beneath her purple dress. Then suddenly her whole form seemed to dilate, and with upturned eyes, as if she sought strength from above, she began to warble forth notes which seem to thrill through me even to this distant day. When these glorious sounds ceased, a solemn silence pervaded the hall for a few moments, as if an angel had passed through, sweeping his golden harp-strings; and then the vast audience arose, and applauded as with one voice. Amidst these acclamations Ulla Borgen retired. I felt nervous and overcome when she approached me, and said, "Now, we do sing together; come, take

your heart ; we must both do our best for the sake of those who love us. Do you know, I often try to think of my dear home in Norway when I am singing."

She held out her fair hand, and we ascended the platform together. I could see nothing but Ulla, think of nothing but her, and that gave me a kind of self-possession. If I had once thought of the vast crowd below me, I think I should have failed. As it was, I sang unconsciously, and well. To my great surprise, after my second performance, I was called for with Ulla, and this time I led her up in front of the orchestra, and, with mingled feelings of humiliation and delight, shared with her the acclamations of my fellow-citizens. Immediately after the concert, Dr. Belton hurried up and shook me warmly by the hand. Tears of pride and sympathy stood in his eyes. "Julian," he cried, "you are a credit to me and to your native city!"

"Bless you, my dear, dear boy," said Mother to me next morning after breakfast ; "bless you, my dear Julian, for you are a good lad, and a great comfort to your poor old mother." I had given her the ticket to the second of the Borgen Concerts. "But, Julian," Mother continued, "have you no one you would like to give the ticket to but me ? Couldn't you sell it, dear, and get ever so much for it ?"

"Whom could I wish to be there so much as you, Mother? And you must give up your scouring and mangling to-day for once, and put on your best shawl and come. Oh, how anxious I am for you to hear and see Miss Borgen!" And then I went on to say that with the money I should receive for the concerts I meant to buy her a winter gown and cloak, and a cock and a couple or so of hens, and that, if I could get a holiday, I thought I would go for a few days to St. Olave's to visit Uncle Grimmer (Aunt Grimmer, by the way, had died a year ago), and take a turn at sea-fishing with Cousin Bill. I then promised Mother that I would run up at half-past one to take her to the concert, which was to begin at three, and then I prepared to depart. When I reached the door, I looked back, and my mother's eyes met mine. She rose, and throwing her arms round my neck, burst into tears.

"My dear, dear boy," she sobbed, "thou art, indeed, the one earthly comfort of my desolate life; for thee I have prayed much, and the God of the fatherless and the widow has heard and answered my prayers. None but God can tell what a joy it is to me to see my own lad growing in goodness, and such a scholar into the bargain. What would my poor Peter have said if he'd a-known that his boy would learn Latin like a graduate! But I mustn't keep you, my boy, so good-bye, good-bye, deary

Julian, and remember that, come what may, goodness must always come first; and may your Heavenly Father keep you from all evil, and bless you for ever and ever!"

I kissed my mother, and departed for morning service, much impressed by her manner and by the solemn blessing she had bestowed upon me; but my heart was light within me, and I felt it was the happiest day since I had left St. Olave's. After matins, I went to Dr. Belton's, and partook of some luncheon (oysters and draught porter), and then I rushed home to fetch my mother. When I arrived opposite our house, I was surprised to see through the open window several women, amongst whom I recognised Sally Garrett and her mother and Mrs. Grigs. At the first instant, in the pride of my heart, I thought they were congratulating Mother on my success, or on her having a ticket for the concert; but at the next, when I noticed how unnaturally silent they all were, a cold chill passed over me, and I felt that something dreadful had happened. I flew through our strip of garden, crying, "Mother! Mother!" There was no reply. I burst into the house, and broke through the ring of women. Then I saw the worst. Mother sat in her usual chair—DEAD!



CHAPTER XI.

Poor Lad—The Devil's Bastion—The Living and the Dead—
Sympathy—The Interruption—The Orphan's Home.

I DID not cry out, but, on the contrary, was perfectly calm, although I needed no assurance that all was over, and that there was no hope. I seized my mother's hand, which was hanging down stiff and cold, though only a few hours before it had clasped my neck in a warm embrace; and then I turned to the women, whose errand I only too surely guessed, saying, "Not yet; pray, leave me only a few minutes."

Old Mrs. Garrett pressed my hand. "Poor lad," she said, "poor, dear lad; we'll leave for a little bit, and when I knock, you'd best come over to mine and get a cup o' tay, and bide there, to sleep and all, if you will, and my Sally shall run down to tell Dr. Belton he must not expect you, and to let your uncle know what has happened."

I marked the true womanly kindness and delicacy

in the tone and manner of those few words from one whom previously I had looked on (God forgive me!) almost as an enemy. Then they left the house, and I remained alone with the dead.

Oh, solemn and never-to-be-forgotten moment! When all sounds of footsteps had died away, I threw myself on my knees beside the body. But I could not weep. I did not pray. I seemed as one stunned, so far as showing any emotion is concerned, though my mind remained clear and calm. How long I knelt gazing upon that pale face I do not know. I was aroused by a loud knocking at the door. Rising, I stole hastily past Mrs. Garrett and out of the house. Skirting the old city wall, I climbed up and threw myself at length upon the grass-grown summit of an ancient tower, known as "the Devil's Bastion." I can still see before me, in my mind's eye, the prospect I saw then—my old home, now a *home* no longer—the still river below, glancing in the summer sun—the fresh, green meadows—the far-off heathy hills—the lazy, flapping sails of the small craft—the stand-still sails of some distant windmills, and the gleaming weathercock on the summit of the cloud-piercing spire of the Cathedral. But what was that fair view to me then? As yet, however, I could scarce realise the loss I had sustained; as yet I could scarcely even believe it. Yet my mind was actively at work, tracing all the

instances and occasions of the love which my mother had ever showed towards me. I noted all the actions she had done, recalled the words she had spoken, pictured her in a thousand until then disregarded situations. But chiefly my mind rested on the blessing she had bestowed on me that morning. Could she, I thought, have been then aware of her so soon coming departure ?

There are times in the lives of almost all, when (as to the minds of drowning men) images of past events rise up clear, distinct, real—when, as it were, a veil is lifted up, and behind we behold the once-enacted scenes of the long-dead past. So was it with me at this time ; and as I meditated, I was possessed by a strange sense of peace and security. My mother, according to the greasy phrases of canting ignorance and presumption, had “left no clear testimony,” had not “died happy” or “triumphant ;” but she had left the far better testimony of a well-spent life, wherein she had “done her duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call her,” and *that* I felt, rather than wordy professions and conceited assurance, would be graciously accepted by Eternal Love.

I suppose I lay some hours stretched on the bastion tower. At length, looking towards the house—now the house of death—I saw the women emerge and close the door after them. I waited a

little, and then got down from the tower, and went indoors. And there again I stood alone with the dead, with all that remained on earth of that being, truest friend, most loving mother, who was dearer to me than all beside. They had laid out the body on a bed in the room in which she had died. As I reverently lifted the white sheet that covered the dear form, the evening sun streamed in upon the pale features, which, even in death, seemed to smile upon me. I replaced the covering, and sat down at a little table (her old work-table), with my face buried in my hands. I was roused by a footstep at the door. In another moment, in the dress of purple silk she had worn at the concert, Ulla Borgen entered the room. She advanced silently, and stood between me and the dead. Then her eyes filled with tears, and she laid her hand softly on my shoulder.

“Julian,” she said, “it is better to be thus. She is at rest; oh, happiness! *at rest*. But for thee, her son, my heart does indeed bleed. Julian,” she continued, in her soft, low voice and foreign accent, “I am alone in a strange land, and thus it may be with *my* mother. It is a very bitter thought, but I think if it were so, I could say, ‘Thy will be done.’ Try and say it too, Julian.”

This gentle sympathy completely met my case. I had not wept before, but now, without shame and freely, I burst into tears. Then—for Ulla Borgen had

sat down beside me—I poured into her patient ears the full tale of my sorrow, and of the worth of her that was gone. God knows how the gentle sympathy which my companion showed healed and softened my wounded heart. God knows how it gave me some faint glimpse of the depth of that love that has made the love of the brethren the test of the love of God, and has declared, “*Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto ME.*” God knows how gratified I feel to this day to her who was content, despising in her noble heart all the base conventional ideas of delicacy, and of what was expected of her by that ignoble herd whom men miscall “the world”—was content, I say, to leave the crowd of adorers that thronged around her, to seek out the orphan in his grief, and to bind up the sad and broken in heart. Ulla was bending down to listen to the outpourings of my sorrow, and her gentle hand rested on mine, when a shadow passed between us and the setting sunlight; then a rough voice exclaimed, “Quite a pictur, I’m sure! Why, Julie, bor, you’re making the most o’ your time, now you’re out o’ leading-strings!”

It was the voice of Uncle Sam, and in another moment Uncle Sam entered the room. I was so ashamed and provoked and discomfited at this coarse salutation, that I could only say, “My mother’s uncle,” and stood blushing and confused. Ulla

Borgen also rose. "I did come, sir," she said, "having heard from my good friend, Dr. Belton, the affliction of your nephew, with whom I should have sung: now it is time for me to return. Julian," she added, turning to me, and giving me her hand, which I made bold to kiss, "fare you well! remember you have always a friend in Ulla Borgen." Then, without looking at Uncle Sam, she passed by and left the house. That was the last I ever saw of the great songstress, but the memory of her kindness will only cease with life. To leave the scene of her triumph, to visit the orphan in his hour of bereavement and first sorrow, was, indeed, the act of the kindest and most Christian of hearts. May God reward her!

"And who's that young stage-stalker?" said Uncle Sam, when we were left alone.

"Miss Borgen, Uncle, the great singer."

"Wheugh," whistled Uncle Sam, in undisguised amazement; "Miss Borgen, was it! Wery perlite of her, tu be sure. Should have asked her to pay for the funeral, though, 'fore she left, Julie, bor—but, oh! this is a bad, bad bis'ness," continued the old man; "a bad, bad bis'ness. I come up moment I heer'd on't, and left Gripe alone in the shop; marcy if the old brute don't worry some'un 'fore I gets back—not that he's got any teeth, and customers is scarcish. But, oh deary me, Julie, to think she's been called fust, and I the eldest; I the eldest by years and

years! Oh, my goles! But tell us all about it, bor, for I'm main sorry, all up at harriage and kinder stammed like, that I be, darn'd if I aint!"

I saw a tear in the corner of Uncle Sam's cunning old eye, and was touched at the appearance of any feeling on the part of the old man. When I had told him all I knew, he became very anxious for me to go home with him at once, telling me at the same time that he meant to keep an old promise made to Mother, and to give me a home. This was really kind, and much as I disliked the old man, I reflected that he was of my own flesh and blood, and the only relative at hand, and I felt, therefore, I could do no otherwise than accept his offer. I obtained leave, however, to sleep at home until the inquest and funeral should be over. Oh, that weary, weary interval! How I passed the time I scarcely know. Through Dr. Belton's kindness, I was excused official attendance at the Cathedral, and I think I spent the long days somewhere far out in the country. How I longed for, yet dreaded, the return at nights to the now silent house, I can alone distinctly remember.

At last the day came when my much-loved friend and mother was borne away to burial in the little churchyard of St. Julian. Uncle Sam was at the funeral, and Mrs. Grigs (Mr. Grigs was there officially, and roared out the Amens in a very threatening manner), and Mrs. Garrett and her daughter, and at

the middle of the service appeared Mick Doughty. Even Uncle Sam was moved to tears during the ceremony, and more than once muttered the words, "Only to think o' she being called fust, and I the eldest!" I could not shed a tear till I returned home for the last time. Late that evening I dragged a little truck, on which were placed my few possessions, through the glaring streets to my new abode. My mother's clothes I gave to Mrs. Grigs and Mrs. Garrett, with the exception of a few which I reserved with the intention of sending them to Bessie, now married to Cousin Bill. The furniture was to be kept for sale by Uncle Sam.

When I arrived at my destination, I found the old gentleman in his inner chamber, refreshing himself with hot gin and water after the fatigues of the day. He received me kindly, and after some little time proposed to show me my bed-chamber, and, accordingly, ushered me into a large room on the first floor, where he left me to unpack my things and go to bed. The room was much out of repair, and looked cheerless enough, and, after my little closet, seemed of vast extent. But there was much fine old carved wood-work about it, and the half-ruinous ceiling was moulded in plaster into numerous interlacing patterns. The chimney had been walled up during the reign of eighteenth century fustiness, but the chimney-piece, which reached to the roof,

was of dark oak, carved with figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity, peering out from garlands of oak leaves and acorns. In one corner stood an old-fashioned oak press, in which I placed my mother's well-used Bible and Prayer-book, my own little stock of books, and my collection of fossils. The Italian picture, which I had not forgotten, I hung opposite the bed. When I had finished these arrangements, I opened a letter which, to my surprise, I had received by the post when engaged in packing up, and which, in the hurry and grief of leaving the home of my birth, I had forgotten. It contained a £10 Bank of England note, and inside the cover was written, "Ulla Borgen, to Julian Cloughton; a sister to a brother in art. When you receive this I shall be away. Do not write. May the good God comfort you. Trust in Him.—U. B." This new instance of thoughtful kindness touched me deeply. Not until I was in bed that night, "watering my couch with my tears," did I feel the full bitterness of being an orphan.





CHAPTER XII.

Drunk and Unapproachable—Ulick Mullen—Hy Brysail—
A Downright Providence!—Midsummer Lukins—Now
or Never—Good-bye.

DURING the next year, which I spent at my grand-uncle's, more changes took place in my position. Lonely, very lonely, did I feel at first, and great was the blank caused by my mother's untimely death. Uncle Sam was, of course, no companion, and I saw as little of him as possible. In fact, the old man was frequently so drunk towards night as to be utterly unapproachable. I was thus thrown much on my own resources, and went and came pretty much as I chose. If, at my age, this had its disadvantages, it at least taught me self-dependence—a quality whose value can be scarcely too highly estimated. Fortunately for myself, I found much pleasure in reading, but my greatest joy was in an intimacy, which fast ripened into a deep friendship, with one of my brother-choristers, Ulick Mullen, an Irish lad

of about my own age. It was strange that one born in so remote and distant a place as Roundstone, on the shores of the Atlantic, in Connemara, should have been found amongst the choristers of Norwich ; but Ulick's father, who held a responsible office in the revenue service, had moved from Ireland when appointed to a similar post on the coast of Norfolk, and had contrived to get his motherless boy, who had been trained in the choir of Armagh, into that of Norwich, whereof he was fast becoming the chief ornament.

And here I must try to describe my friend Ulick. He was small in stature, and slight, but wonderfully lithe and active. His complexion was dark as a Spaniard's, but far clearer, and he had dark, soft masses of waving brown hair, long, dark eyelashes, and grey piercing eyes. All must have thought him beautiful ; to me he was the very embodiment and ideal of the perfection of human grace and beauty. His voice, in speaking, was soft and low ; in singing, of great compass and of exquisite purity and richness. His ear for music was almost perfect, and he had great taste in sketching and colouring. Full of fire and spirit, Ulick was also full of gentleness and love. In many things simple as a child, in many he showed wisdom and decision far beyond his years. Our common fondness for the wide heaths eastward of the city

first, I think, drew us together. It reminded him of his native country, he said, to see those free, purple-flowering expanses of heath and ling. It was a great joy to me, and a constant well-spring of interest, to hear this darling friend dilate on the grand scenes he had visited with his father, and he would speak of them with the natural grace and liveliness of expression common to his countrymen. I was never tired of hearing him tell of the long, long heaving swell of the great Atlantic, rolling in in unbroken sweep against the rocks of Slyne Head, and Killerran, and tower-crowned Lettermullen ; or, grander still, against the outer precipices of black limestone on the western side of Innismane, the great Isle of Aran. And I loved to hear of the glories of the sunset lights, as seen from lonely Urris Beg, glancing on the twelve serried peaks of Boribola and the mountains of Maam Turc, and over the thousand nameless tarns which stud the trackless moors between those mountains and the waters of the "mournful and misty Atlantic," as a modern poet, in the spirit of Ulick, has so beautifully termed it. I heard, too, from my friend of the fairy isles of Hy Brysail, seen in clear weather at rare intervals from the rocks of Moher and the outer cliffs of Aranmore —isles that flit ever westwards, westwards over the blue ocean-plains, as the longing mariner directs his course towards them. Ulick ! years have passed

since I held thy dear hand in mine, yet still at times I fancy I hear you singing that sweet song, beginning—

“Oh, Aranmore ! Oh, Aranmore !
How oft I think of thee,
And of the days when by thy shore
I wander'd young and free !”

And then, although the wide Atlantic separates us, I picture you in your Canadian homestead beside the waters of the great St. Lawrence, with that beaming, loving girl beside you whom you chose—then, to my great sorrow, for love is always disposed to jealousy—as your bride from Norwich, “the City of Fair Women !”

To my great grief, Dr. Belton suddenly resigned his situation as organist, and left Norwich, to take possession of an estate in the West Indies which he had unexpectedly inherited from a distant relative. His successor, a very young gentleman with green spectacles and a shrill voice, took, I know not why, a great dislike to me, and lost no time in letting me know that he “should feel it to be his duty, his most painful duty,” he said, “to advise the Precentor to appoint another singer in my place, as I was really getting worse than useless.” I was much taken aback at this declaration, although I was well aware I had much overtaxed my voice, and I returned to Uncle Sam’s in very low spirits. I found the old

gentleman in close conversation with a well-dressed, oily-whiskered personage, whom I at once recognised as the man to whom Stephen owed his ruin. When they saw me, a great whispering ensued, and then the smart man took his leave, with a parting injunction to my uncle to "draw it mild at fust."

"Nice gen'lum that!" exclaimed Uncle Sam, when his visitor was out of sight; "that's what I calls a reg'lar, downright, make-no-bones-about-it sort o' chap, and al'ust cheery-like and pleasant, and oh, what a bis'nus he du drive, tu be sure! I wish I'd a spoke in his wheel, that I du; and isn't his Jamaicy rum fust-rate, that's all?"

Not knowing to what this glowing eulogium was going to lead, I thought it best to keep silence. This angered my uncle.

"Darn the boy!" he exclaimed, "that's al'ust the way wi' him. Blest if he ain't enow to mope one's life out o' one! Jest when one's getting kinder chatty, warming with one's wittles, leastways with one's drink, as a man may say, he goes and tarns as flat as ditch-water. Now then, out wi' it; what ails t' lad?"

I answered that I had just had bad news—that the new organist had told me that my voice was ruined, and that I feared I could not long retain my situation in the choir. As I spoke, Uncle Sam looked grave for a moment, and then I saw his old

eyes twinkle, and he asked how much I earned a-month. He knew this well enough, by the way, without asking, and that for the best of reasons, but I nevertheless told him.

"And if they tarn yer out o' choir, yer'd lose all, I suppose?"

"Of course I should, Uncle."

I saw the old cunning eyes twinkle more and more, and then the old man shouted out, as he clapped his hands together, "Blest if it ain't a downright providence!"

This, I thought, was at all events a curious view to take of the matter, so I waited to hear more.

"That 'ill be," continued Uncle Sam, in a tone of triumphant reflection—"that 'ill be a downright providence! Really 't seems as if it *wor* to be. Why, Julie, bor, jest as yer come in, Mr. Lukins, 'Midsummer Lukins,' as they call him—him as has got the Midsummer Tea-Gardens and Royal Cocoanut Concert Hall—sich a bis'nness, tu be sure!—jest as yer come in, as I wor a-sayin', Mr. Lukins was a-offerin' yer a berth, just for all the world like a double-distilled father, as yer'd make yer fortin by in less nor no time; and I was a-sayin' as how I was agreeable. But how about that confuscated Cathedral, thought I; what with that *practisin'*, how'll the bor ha' time to practise for the s'loon. Howsomdever, now, as the Cathedral and all that

hummin' and dronin's at an end, I'll jest step up to Lukins's, and say as how yer wheels ha' been greased mortal proper, and that yer'll 'cept his offer, grateful as flowers in May."

During the whole of this rambling address my mind was with Stephen, and with Stephen's fate, and when my uncle had ended, I had my answer ready.

"Uncle," I said, quietly, "pray don't go, for, come what may, I will accept no offer from that man."

As I spoke, I saw the blood rush up to the very roots of the old man's thin and grizzled hair, and he seemed literally to gasp for breath.

"You —— young scoundrel!" he roared out at length, "what d'yer mean by calling my friend Lukins, Midsummer Lukins, him as half the gents in Norwich knows, and is proud o' knowing, 'that man'? 'That man'! indeed. Pretty well that for an orphan brat, who might be on the parish but for me! But I tell yer what, my lad, you *shall* 'cept his offer, you **SHALL**, you **SHALL**, burned if yer don't. There, I've said it now, and I means it!"

I saw that if I yielded now I was lost. "Uncle," I replied, "I have much to thank you for. You have given me a home since Mother died (I forgot, in the hurry of speaking, that after the first month my uncle had pocketed three-fourths of my salary for board and lodging), and I am sorry indeed to

displease you, but go to that man I won't, no, not if I starve first!"

"Then starve you may, yer ungrateful young blackguard!" retorted my uncle, "for not a bit nor a sup'll yer get from me. Looke, bor, I'se an old man, but I knows my mind, and when I says a thing I means it; so now I gives yer fair warning, if yer don't go to Lukins's s'loon, gardens and all, to sing in the situation I'se been moiling and toiling to get for yer, budge yer shall, bag and baggage, and yer shall never darken these doors agen. There, don't go to speak again," he added, as he saw me about to answer; "I want no imperent answers, but get to bed with yer, and if yer ain't got a proper answer ready by mornin', by——"

I did not hear the rest, for I rushed from the room and upstairs to my own chamber, where I threw myself on my knees, and prayed for support and guidance to the Father of the fatherless.

I soon found it was but too true that the new organist's opinion of my voice was well founded. The anxiety caused by my late bereavement and grief had brought on great weakness in the throat, and this rapidly increased under my present state of vexation: since, therefore, the doctor could give no hope of its speedy restoration, it was decided that I should leave the choir at the end of the quarter. As that time drew on, Lukins became a more and

more frequent visitor to Uncle Sam. I never myself alluded to the subject of my proposed engagement at the Gardens, but my resolution remained unchanged to decline it at all hazards. My uncle evidently fully reckoned on my compliance with his wishes, and one day reiterated his threat, which I saw he was fully prepared to carry out, of turning me out of doors if I did not accept the situation which his friend pressed on me. As I answered him never a word, he thought he had gained his point; but he was never more mistaken. Little by little I removed all my books, fossils, and other possessions from my room, unsuspected by the old man, who seldom or never came upstairs, and gave them in charge to Ulick Mullen, who entered into all my plans with more than the affection of a brother.

The motives which actuated so sporting and showily-dressed a personage as Mr. Midsummer Lukins in his intercourse with an old second-hand-goods storekeeper were to me for long a matter of wonder. I now believe that they may be found in the fact that Uncle Sam, whose almost only expense was liquor, was commonly reputed to be in reality a much richer man than his appearance or establishment would have led people to expect. Common rumour set him down as a miser, and the friendship of Mr. Lukins may not have been so disinterested as he wished it to appear. In addition to this, I have

no doubt that, wishing to have an educated professional singer at his saloon, he fixed on me, the most friendless of the choristers, and so probably the cheapest, as a possible successor to Stephen.

The day before the end of that my last quarter was a sad one. I looked round with true and bitter sorrow on those huge arches and noble aisles of the Cathedral, whose every stone I seemed to know and love. My voice was half-choked when I joined in the responses that last evening service, and caught or threw back the sweet, familiar words of the psalms across the lofty choir; and when the grand tones of the organ rang along the roof as we retired, a thousand dear yet melancholy memories crowded upon my mind. It is seldom that we know how dear things are to us until we have lost them, or are about to be parted from them. After I had taken off my chorister's gown for the last time (with execrable taste we then wore gowns instead of surplices), I went to receive my salary. When I came out, my brother choristers were all assembled, with most of the younger singing-men, to bid me farewell. I need not conceal that I was popular with my mates, and that many staunch young hearts were sad at my departure. "Good-bye, Cloughton"—"Good-bye, old fellow"—"Good-bye, dear old lad" resounded on all sides. Ulick alone was silent; but to me his silence spoke more eloquently than

all the rest, dearly as I loved them all. But their kindness deeply affected me. To be beloved, and to know it, is a great and priceless blessing, and to have a true *friend* is the best of all earthly possessions. Presently a shrill, discordant voice interposed. I was looking up at the moment at a stone boss in the great roof of the nave, whereon were carved three seraphs gazing down from a rock upon a fallen angel; when my eyes dropped, they fell upon the new organist—the very young gentleman with the green spectacles.

"Now then, Cloughton," he screamed, "be off; we want no strangers lurking about here. You've got your brass; much good may it do you!"

Angry and hurt at this uncalled-for harshness, I answered impudently, and returned for the last time to Uncle Sam's.

That night, while I was putting up a few necessities in a bundle, and sewing up Ulla Borgen's bank-note (which, with my quarter's salary, made me feel quite a capitalist) in my coat-lining, the old man came home in a state of maudlin drunkenness. So vanished the few feelings of compunction I had experienced at leaving so secretly the house of my grand-uncle.



CHAPTER XIII.

A Sop to Cerberus—Good-bye, Gripe—Farewell to Ulick—
Pretty Gentleman—Rachel Petulengro—True Love never
did run Smooth—Two Canons.

THE next morning I rose before sunrise. Having left an envelope containing thirty shillings, in lieu of notice to quit, upon the table, directed, "To Mr. Samuel Breeze, from his affectionate nephew"—a sop to the Cerberus of conscience—and having taken a cordial leave of old Gripe, who slept amongst the lumber, and seemed terribly disposed to bark at my early departure, I left the house of my mother's uncle. Then I crossed the cool, silent city, and, climbing over the low stone wall, entered the little churchyard of St. Julian. No stone then marked Mother's grave (now a simple cross marks it), but I knew the spot well, and as I kneeled beside the mound of earth, I comforted my heart with the belief that I was acting as she would have had me act in thus flying from temptation. On my return,

led by some strange feeling of attraction, I went some little way out of my road, and passed through the street in which stood the still silent house of my great-uncle, and then striking northwards, I gained one of the bridges across the river. And there stood Ulick Mullen, who had promised overnight to meet me, and accompany me a few miles on the road to St. Olave's, whither I had resolved to direct my course. Ulick insisted on shouldering my bundle, and then, taking hands like children or lovers, we trudged on together. It was still early, and as yet scarcely anyone was stirring in the streets, which looked wonderfully wide, and smelt abnormally sweet and fresh after a light shower which had fallen in the early part of the foregoing night. We were soon in the country, and after a bit began to meet waggons loaded with vegetables coming into market, with fresh-looking, buxom women carrying huge bunches of flowers seated on the top. Then came droves of confiding sheep, led by ruddy shepherd-lads in brown frocks cunningly embroidered, and leatherne girdles, and wearing bits of heather or flowering gorse stuck in their broad-brimmed felt hats. To them the prospect of a day in the city was doubtless as fair as the prospect of the green country was to me. Before seven o'clock we had reached a village four miles on the road. Here we rested at a snug country ale-house shaded by a

great chestnut tree, and partook (I, as the capitalist, standing treat) of country bread-and-butter, cream cheese, rashers of bacon, and honest, home-brewed ale. I had some difficulty in getting Ulick to leave me. "If it weren't for my father," he said, "I'd go wid you, dear Julie, to the world's end. But you'll write and I'll write, and let's remember that true friends like us can never be altogether parted; our hearts must always be together; and love like ours will join us when we are far from each other." He insisted on going one mile farther on the road with me, declaring he could easily run back in time for matins. Then we kissed each other and parted, not (I am not ashamed to confess it) without many tears. Presently I looked back—Ulick turned at the same moment: we waved hands, and then a turn of the road parted each of us from the other's sight. So I walked on alone.

"Good-morrow, pretty gentleman; it's early you're walking!" cried a strange voice, which seemed to issue from the recesses of a cart drawn by an old black horse, and covered over with a canopy of ragged felt.

"Good-morning, Mother," I answered, for the strange voice was a woman's; "but you're altogether mistaken when you call me a gentleman."

"Not a gentleman! Well, sure, 'gentle is that gentle does' isn't the fashion now-a-days. Not a

gentleman ! No, indeed, not yet ; but I can tell by the glim of your eye you 'll be a grand gentleman one of these fine days, and live in a big house like Blickling Hall yinder, which has three hundred and sixty-five windows and a cheese-room grating ; so if you 'll only come up here and give me your hand, it 's a fine fortune I 'll tell you ; or if you 'd liefer have it told by a pretty lass, why, there 's as likely-looking a mauther here, if she isn't out o' sort, as ever crossed a heath ! Rachel, rouse up, my sweety ! don't you see the young squire that is to be is coming to sit by the poor bodies ? It 's not proud that he is to the poor folks !"

That name—Rachel ! I was somewhat tired with walking, and the name of Rachel determined me to accept the old woman's offer of a lift. Rachel, I remembered, was the name of the heroine, so to speak, of some of poor Stephen's poems ; it had been a gipsy girl who had come to seek him after his disappearance. What if this were *his* Rachel ? Thus musing, I clambered up into the cart, refusing at the same time the elder gipsy's offer to relieve me of my bundle. Strange as it may seem, I found old Mrs. Smith, or Petulengro, as she would have called herself, very amusing company ; and when I marked the dark hair and flashing eyes of Rachel, her silent and moody companion, I felt pretty certain that what we call chance had thrown me in the way of her

who had alone come to seek out Stephen Hartley. How to ascertain this I did not know. At length I ceased talking, and calling to mind the old story of King Richard Cœur de Lion in his German dungeon, I began to whistle and then to sing a little song which I had found set to music amongst Stephen's papers.

THE GIPSY SWEETHEART.

“ O'er the heath, o'er the heath,
Far, far away,
Where the broom-flowers are blooming,
It joys me to stray.

“ O'er the ling, o'er the heath,
Down in the dell,
Where the dark pines are glooming,
It joys me to dwell.

“ O'er the ling, o'er the heath,
There will I greet,
In the dews of the evening,
The track of her feet.

“ O'er the heath, o'er the heath,
There will I rest,
With Rachel, my treasure,
My first love, and best.”

When I had ended, I heard a deep sob, and, looking round, saw the tears standing in the dark eyes of the younger gipsy. Presently she put her finger to her

lips, as if to enjoin silence, and then pushing the old woman, who was dozing off to sleep, she said, "It's stifling hot in here; I'll e'en get out and trudge it a mile or two; there, take the reins. And you," she added, turning to me, "can you manage to walk a mile, d'ye think, and keep a gipsy girl company?"

I nodded, and Rachel sprang out of the cart, an example which I quickly followed. When the cart had gone forward out of earshot, my companion turned to me—"How did you learn that song? tell me, if you have any pity."

I was sorry to do so, but I answered, "I should rather ask, what's that to you, or anybody? I know a hundred songs, and if I had to tell how and where I learned them all, I should have a much harder job than I'd like to undertake on a hot summer morning like this."

"But *this* one—for the love of pity, tell me how you learned *this* one, and why, of all others, did you sing it when I was by? You must have had a reason."

"Yes, I had a reason: your name's Rachel, isn't it?"

"Yes, sure; but was that your only reason?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, then," urged the girl, "for God's sake tell me. Oh! if you could only guess why I wish to know, I'm sure you would tell me at once."

"I think I *do* know," said I. "You are *the* Rachel of the song."

"I am; but how ever could you come to know it?"

"And *the* Rachel," I continued, "who went to Norwich Punchbowl to inquire after a young man."

"I am, I am; but how came you to know all this?"

"Because I knew that young man, and loved him; he was my friend and brother."

"*You!* Why, you must have been only a slip of a boy then!"

"Nothing more; but friendship and love no more respect age than they respect persons."

"Well, but where is he? Where is Stephen now?"

"That I cannot tell; would to Heaven that I could!"

"Would rather that *I* could—I who'd a died for him!" said the girl. "Oh, why did he leave Norwich? Could he think I had played him false—I who loved him better than my life?"

The girl's manner now became very excited, and she strode along the road with long, hurried steps. I scarcely knew how to answer her last question, but I said at last, "I cannot tell you positively, but I think that he believed himself to be deserted by his sweetheart, and that that sweetheart's name was

Rachel. I gathered this from what he said, and from some papers which he left behind him. And if, as you say, you are that Rachel, I am very——”

“It is as I feared, then,” interrupted my companion, “as if I—I, who was led into the right paths by him—could ever forget him for a moment! Oh, Stephen, if you could only have known the bitterness of the nights and days of that accursed time of absence, the tears I shed, the prayers I prayed—the prayers which you taught me!”

“The prayers!” I could not help repeating. There was a shade of doubt in my tone which I could not repress. Rachel perceived it in a moment.

“Yes, the prayers,” she said again. “Was it not Stephen who first taught me to pray? Was it not Stephen who first taught me to read the Good Book? But they took that from me.”

“Who took it from you?” I asked.

“Hush,” she answered, glancing at the cart; for in our eager conversation we had walked on so fast as to have nearly overtaken it. “Hush! let us again drop behind a bit. They watch me narrowly still; but oh! I can baulk ‘em.” And she began to sing a stave of some merry Romany song in the strange language of the strange people to which she belonged. When the cart had again gone on some distance in front, Rachel resumed:

“Don’t think my heart went with that song, lad;

I only sang it for a blind. It 'ill be many a long day before my heart dances to my own music again. But I've not told you all; but I must, and I will, for you knew and loved him, and that draws me to you as to a brother."

That I should thus have been destined to become the confidant and to be called "brother" by two such different personages as Stephen Hartley the singing-man, and Rachel Petulengro the gipsy, was one of those coincidences which good people who never exchange a word with anyone out of their own narrow clique or class, and mix but little with their fellows, are apt to call "preposterously unnatural," and "only likely to occur in novels." Those, however, who mingle much with their fellow-men will think differently, as I do now; but then, in my inexperience of the tangled mazes of life, the circumstance struck me as very strange. I said nothing, however, to my companion, who presently continued her recital.

"I was but sixteen when I first saw Stephen Hartley. I was gay and light then, and cared for nothing and nobody. Well do I recollect the day I saw him first! I was on the heath at Broomyates, and sitting among the brakes by the path, and had plenty of time to notice him as he came by, but he could not see me, for I was hidden in the brakes. His pale face and fiery eyes are before me now. On

he came. When he was close to me I shouted out, 'A dark past, a fair future, comrade ! Storm first, then sunshine !'

"'Who spoke ?' he cried, for he could not see me, for I lay as close as an old hare in her form—'who spoke, and who can tell how dark my past has been ?'

"'The darker the night, the brighter the stars shine,' I answered, coming out of my covert. 'Come, give me your hand, young man; or I mistake, there's good luck in store for you yet.'

"'Good luck,' said he, with a kind of laugh; 'don't mock me, lass; devil a bit of good luck's in store for me; but I must bide my time; there's an end of all things some time or other.'

"Now I'd told fifty lads' fortunes, and little enough I cared for any of them; but now he spoke so wild and sorrowful that my heart bled for him, and I spoke gentle-like, and told him not to be so mure-hearted, but at all events to have hope. 'And what,' said I—for of course I could not tell what ailed him—'what if some lass has proved false, there's a many who'll be ready now to prove fond !'

"'Yes,' he answered, hastily, 'if there was one single heart that loved me, loved me truly for my own sake, I might be different. But who are you, lass, that I, who open my heart to nobody, should open it to you ?'

"At that moment I saw one of my own people approaching, so, whispering, 'We shall meet again,' I said aloud, 'Well, if you won't be told the luck that's in store for you, you won't; but you'd best think twice about it.' Stephen nodded 'yes' to my whisper, and ran down the hill. For the first time in my life, I think, I felt for the sorrow of one who wasn't a Rom. Maybe, or rather—for I need not hide what I am not ashamed of, but rather glory in—I was touched by Stephen's words and manner; touched with love for him, I mean. Well, to make a long story short, we met again and again and again, and we loved each other, and then earth felt like heaven. And then Stephen talked of us marrying and living as we best could; but as yet, for all the great love I bore him, I couldn't make up my mind to that. The worst sin a Romany girl can commit is to marry away from the Roms; and some who did so disappeared. One, a lass I knew, kept company with a young squire down there, Thetford ways, and she disappeared. They said she had run away and joined the Bucklands down away in the Sheres somewhere, but anyhow she never came back; and I was afraid, and kept putting Stephen off from time to time. But we met secretly oftener than ever, and he used to sing hymns for me—anthems he called 'em—such as he sang in the great church thinder. And sometimes he'd sing as if he felt their meaning,

and then he'd flush up, and seem all unhappy-like, and sometimes not. Anyhow, little by little, I felt 'em, and deeply too ; and soon they fared to change me altogether, for before that I was but a light kind o' lass, and minded little either for God or devil. And after a bit I got Stephen to read to me out of the book from which the hymns were taken—out of the Bible. This, however, was before he taught me to read myself. And sometimes Stephen would laugh as he read, but each word seemed to burn into my very heart. Then, little by little, Stephen told me of all his goings-on, which he'll have told you too mayhap, and then I scolded him. Yes, I, Rachel, the Romany girl, scolded him, the church singing-man, and told him plainly I'd never wed one that played such devil's games as he did o' nights. At first I thought I'd prevailed, but then everything went wrong again. And now I began to hate the goings-on of my own people—some of them at least—and I began to find out I was watched. One night I heard a lad, who was always plaguing me to take up with him, telling 'em he thought I was keeping company with one of the Busne, as we call all who are not Roms, and begging them to look sharp after me. So for nigh a month I never went near our meeting-place by Thorbury Barrows. At last one day I ventured, and sure enough there sat Stephen, looking, oh! so pale and wild ; and he

taunted and jeered at me, and said he was going to the devil again ten times worse than ever, and all because I had forsaken him. I told him how I had been suspected and watched, and at last he quieted down. Then I promised to meet him again on a certain evening when I knew Bungay races would draw away most of my people, for I conceited. I'd sham ill, and so be left behind. And so we parted, and I've never seen his face again since with these eyes, though, God knows, it's before me night and day. That evening I was taken ill—I hope I was not poisoned by lad Charley—and when I got but a bit better we broke our camp, and I was taken off to the heaths by Herringfleet, over Suffolk ways. There we bode a month, and then back again. One day, on some pretence, I managed to get away unnoticed, and went down to the city alone. Oh, how I tore along! but I pulled up short when I reached Bishop's Bridge, for I then remembered that, often as we'd been together, Stephen had never once told me where he lodged. But I knew he sang in the great church, so there I went. I'd maybe never been in a church before, save once at Kirby Cane, when the parson there came to invite us, and I scarce knew which way to turn. But churching was just beginning, and I hid myself behind a great pillar like a twisted pine-stalk, and there stood waiting. And then the music struck up,

so grand and terrible, and then so soft and sweet, it was like the birds singing in a wood after a tempest ; and I heard the voices, but oh ! not his. But they sang what he'd oft and oft sung to me, and I couldn't bear it, but fell on my knees and cried fit to break my heart. Then up comes a man in a black gown with a silver stick or something, and ups with me, saying he wondered I wasn't ashamed to make such a pother, and that they didn't want any flaunting maughers like me there. So out I went, and waited till 'twas all over, and then I saw the singers and priests all in white coming out, but no Stephen among them ; and then my heart seemed to die within me, though I had felt all the while he wasn't there. Presently three boys came by. I seized one by the shoulder, and said, hard and thick like, for my heart was in my mouth a'most—‘Where's Stephen ?—for God's love tell me where's Stephen !’

“‘O cry !’ said the boy, ‘here's a delicious go ! Here's a gal wants our Stephen, who hasn't cut and run away—oh no, not in the least. And he hasn't been and carried off the great silver cup and poker—oh no, not at all !’

“‘It's a lie !’ I screamed out, throwing the boy from me with such force that he fell on the stones—‘it's a lie, and it's ill luck you'll have for deceiving a poor girl.’ You see my old breeding showed itself

here, but I was a'most mad with rage and vexation.
May God forgive me!

"‘Oh, a gipsy !’ answered the boy, getting up.
‘If I’d known that sooner, I’d a’ been more polite,
I’m sure, for mother says it’s mortal awkward to
offend a gipsy. Mother’s sister did once, and was
took with the black jaundice that very day week,
and wasn’t she as cross as two crabs, that’s all ?’
This was to the other boys who stood by. Then he
turned to me. ‘But since you cut me over, miss,
you may learn about Stephen from some one else.
Take my advice, and go and ask the Dean. Thief
Stephen ! O cry ! here’s a spree !’

“Now I’d been born and bred in the midst of
thieving, or something like it, but Stephen’s Book
had taught me to hate it, and I felt sure he was not
a thief, though I was only too ready to hear much
ill of him. But though I disbelieved the boy’s
words with all my heart, they still made me feel
miserable, and I was fit to curse myself for the
violence which had stopped me from hearing where
he bode. But I now saw a priest coming out of the
church. I ran up to him and took him by the gown,
saying, ‘Please, is Stephen Hartley, the singing-
man, ill, or what is become of him ?’ I can still
hear his answer ringing in my ears, ‘Who did you
say ?’ said the gentleman ; ‘whose name did you
mention, young woman, with, I am pained to say it,

such very unseemly, indeed with such very indecent haste? I am really at a loss for an answer. If, however, you venture to suppose *me* to be mixed up in any way with that, I must say, very criminal young man's proceedings, you are much mistaken, I——'; but I was off like a shot, feeling as if I could have torn his heart out and felt it a relief. I rushed back into the church. The organ was still playing, and in the midst stood another priest, tall and thin, with short black hair and grey eyes, looking up at the roof and listening to the music. I was nigh mad with rage, but the music quieted me, and I went up softly and waited till it ceased with a sound like the wind in autumn amongst the fir trees. Then the priest's eyes fell, and when they dropped on me, he asked, in a low, gentle voice, what I might want. I told him. He looked at me fixedly a moment, and then asked why I wanted to find Stephen Hartley.

“‘Because I love him,’ I answered.

“‘That’s enough,’ said the priest; ‘wait a minute here, and I’ll enquire for you. Poor girl, you love him!’ He went and spoke to the man with the silver stick who’d turned me out of the church before, and then coming back, he told me to enquire at the Punchbowl in Ormsdale Street.

“‘My girl,’ he said, ‘I know but little of the circumstances, having but just returned from Italy,

but I fear this Stephen Hartley is a young man scarcely worthy of that great treasure, the true love of a young girl. More I will not say, but if you find him, which, from what I hear, is little likely, you must try to win him back to better ways. True love has great power for good. It is God's will that it should be so. Now good-bye.'

"This was the first time I had ever been spoken kindly to by any of the Busne, save by Stephen, and now I, the wild Romany lass, was asked to win back another to good. I could have kissed that man's feet a'most, but my heart was so full, I could not get out one word of thanks before he had given me his hand and left me. So away I went, and tore across the city to Ormsdale. You seem to have heard I went to the Punchbowl, and you know that I could find no trace of Stephen there. And now I've told you all, save that I am the most miserable girl alive."

With these words Rachel fell a-crying bitterly. And little indeed could I say to comfort her, yet I recounted all I knew about Stephen's disappearance, and told her the report that he had been seen in Cambridge playing a barrel-organ. I added that any further tidings I might gain I would communicate to her, and asked how we could manage to correspond. We at last decided that letters should be directed to the charge of Ulick Mullen, to whom

I promised to write on the subject. We had scarcely settled this point when we perceived that the old woman, after beckoning impatiently for us to approach, was turning down a by-road.

"If you're for St. Olave's," said Rachel, "we part at yinder turning, for we're to camp on Brandersby Commons, and you must turn to the left. It's done my heart good to have opened it to you, and to have spoken out about Stephen to one who loved him, and I'm now half-expecting good news. You won't forget to write, nor will I; it was Stephen that taught me." So saying, the girl put her thin brown hand in mine. "I must kiss you, lad," she added, "for are you not *his* brother, and if his, mine?"

We embraced and parted, and I trudged on upon my lonely road with much food for serious thought.





CHAPTER XIV.

St. Olave's again—Beside the Graves—Ernsey Tower—The Raven! the Raven!—Marriage Lines—Stephen's Mother.

THAT same evening I reached St. Olave's, where I intended to make some considerable stay; but how little do we know what is before us! I did not pass through the main village, but struck across the sandy fields abutting on the cliffs, and redolent with the smell of decaying fish and sea-weeds, which were used for manure, to the nook in which stood the cottage of my Uncle Grimmer. As I neared it, I pictured to myself the old man sitting braiding a net at the door, and Cousin Bill sprawling on the ground beside him, baiting his lobster corfs, while his wife (I think I mentioned that Bill had married blooming Bessie Bunce) prepared supper or played with the little ones. Alas! this was but an ideal picture. When I approached the old red-tiled cottage, I saw no smoke issuing

from the low chimney-stack; two or three Danish crows flew away from before the house, the door was locked, and the place evidently deserted by man. Where could they all be? They had moved to the village, I thought, as I sadly left the lorn-looking premises. My way lay along the cliffs, beneath which the great sea was spread out "more glorious than a silver shield," and passed the church. I clambered over the churchyard wall, of red brick and flints, which was fringed with bugloss and parietaria and yellow ragweed, and soon was standing by the well-remembered graves of the drowned stranger and of the prodigal son of my good old Aunt Grimmer, whose own tombstone I now saw for the first time. Nettles were growing over and beside the three graves. This I could not understand. However, as I was clearing them away, I saw the old, mumbling sexton, in his ancient and faded green coat and waistcoat, entering the church-yard. And then I learned that my Great-uncle Grimmer, and Bill, and Bessie, and the children had all left St. Olave's some months before. The old man had been appointed Brother of the Seamen's Hostel at Yarmouth, where also Bill and his wife had settled. I immediately resolved to follow them, and, starting on the morrow, to walk the whole distance along the coast. That night I slept at the old sexton's, but not before I had sought and found

many an old playmate amongst the groups assembled on the cliffs and by the railings in front of the Lord Nelson, whereof the landlord was one of the old "Agamemnon men," and had fought the French in many a glorious sea-fight under the glorious Norfolk hero.

Next day I did not start till late. Ernsey Tower lay in my way, and of course I laid myself out to visit my old friend, Dame Goodram. When I reached the ruined church, I found the door of the tower open, and, supposing the old woman was out, I ascended the latter with the intention of awaiting her return. As I crossed the threshold, I heard a wild voice whisper in strange, thrilling tones, "The Raven! the Raven!" The voice, I thought, was Dame Goodram's, and, pushing aside the tattered curtain which hung over the doorway, I entered the octagonal apartment; and then again the strange cry, "The Raven! the Raven!" fell upon my ears. There, upon a low truckle bed, lay the old woman whom I had come to visit, asleep, indeed, but looking, oh! so wild. Her face had shrunk and wizened up almost to nothing. Round her head was wound a long white handkerchief, turban-wise, while from underneath this weird head-dress streamed forth her long black and grey locks of hair. Her brown, shrivelled arms, covered only to the elbow by a yellowish bed-gown, lay tossing outside the counter-

pane, which looked as if it might have been made of pieces of the clothes of drowned seamen. Above, at the bed-head, silent and motionless, sat the old tame sea-gull. As I looked on this strange figure, her lips moved and her arms shook convulsively, as she exclaimed in her disturbed slumber, “It is the hand of God! Did I say *I* brought it? It was the Lord’s doing! Oh, the Raven, the Raven!”

I sat by the bedside, not without a feeling of awe and terror, and as I watched, a story came up from the mists of past years—a story current in St. Olave’s, which was held as conclusive evidence of the possession of occult and magical powers by Dame Goodram. It was to this effect:—

A farmer in a neighbouring village fell ill of some mysterious disease, which none of the neighbouring doctors could either understand or cure. The man seemed pining away. At length his wife consulted Dame Goodram, who desired her to procure a raven, cut out its warm liver, broil it on the fire, and give it to her husband, who would forthwith recover. Unluckily, ravens had for nearly a century been unknown in that district, and, accordingly, the farmer’s wife returned home with but a low opinion of the wisdom of the “Wise Woman,” which, in anger, she depreciated to all her acquaintances, and amongst them to the under-gamekeeper of a neigh-

bouiring squire. That same evening, the same keeper having killed a rabbit, laid it outside a wood, and, concealing himself in the adjacent heather, awaited the approach of those Danish or hooded crows which are so common upon the coast of Norfolk, and which it was his object to kill. Before long, four or five of these birds had collected, and while two of them settled upon the carcass, the rest hovered about in the air above. The keeper hesitated to fire until all should settle. On a sudden, while he was waiting, he heard a loud croak, and immediately, as from the sky, a huge black bird stooped down upon the bait, from which the crows instantaneously retreated. The story of the "Wise Woman's" strange prescription at once swept across the keeper's mind. He had scouted the idea of such a bird as a raven being found in the district; and now a raven, the first he had seen in all his life, was before his eyes in bodily form. He levelled his gun, but so agitated was he, that he could not take aim. Thrice was he compelled to lower his piece; then, calming himself by a strong effort, he fired, and shot the strange bird dead. The slain raven was carried to the sick man's wife, who extracted the liver, broiled it on the coals, and gave it to her husband. The farmer ate—and *was cured!* If the farmer's wife had before been angry, so now was she thankful, and

sounded Dame Goodram's praises far and near. On expressing her gratitude to the old woman, and asking how it was she knew that the raven was coming, Dame Goodram answered, "Know? I didn't know, but I did more—*I sent it!*"

Such was the story which, years before, I had heard from the village crones and fisher-lads at St. Olave's—such the tale of which the main facts are indisputable. Now the memory of her sinful and presumptuous speech was plainly harrowing the mind of the speaker. It was terrible to witness the horror which that still sleeping but agitated face expressed, and to see how those brown, shrunken arms were wildly thrown about. Presently, I observed that the old woman grasped a faded strip of paper in her yellow, vice-like fingers. It was a certificate of a marriage register from the parish books of Eyston-on-the-Sands, of the marriage of Stephen Hartley of Mottlesham, musician, and Rebecca Smith. That Stephen Hartley, I at once concluded, must be my Stephen's father—that Rebecca Smith his mother. Stephen, then, was born in wedlock. Could I only find him, I could resolve one sad doubt, and administer to him one drop of comfort. But what connection, I wondered, could old Dame Goodram have with him? Why, of all people, should she be in possession of the register? And who was Rebecca Smith? If, before, I had been

painfully affected and even alarmed at the old woman's disturbed gestures and wild exclamations, so now I was a prey to the utmost curiosity and anxiety. I could not bear to remain any longer in suspense. Rising, I went outside the door and knocked violently. And then again I heard the same strange, thrilling voice from the bed—"No, I tell you, it was not I sent it; it was the hand of God, I say; or, if not, it was the devil brought it! Ha! ha! it was the devil brought it, as black as himself!" The voice ceased as I entered. Dame Goodram lay awake, with her sunken but still bright eyes turned towards the door.

"It is my own lad," she exclaimed. "Oh, Julian! I am all alone, and very bad—very bad, indeed. I b'lieve I'm dying, lad, and right thankful I am to see one kind face afore I go."

I sat down by the bedside, speaking soothingly to the poor old creature, and ended by urging her to let me fetch a doctor and a clergyman.

"No priests for me," she answered; "I daren't see one; and as for doctors, I'm past them, for it's not many hours I have to live, and it's getting dark already. But, Julian, I am right glad you've come—you who alone, of all the childer, ever spoke civilly to me, and had a kind word and a bright look for the lonely old woman. I'm glad you've come, I tell 'ee, lad, for I've summat to give 'ee. There,

take out that stone yinder, and give me the bag that lies behind it."

I removed a loose stone to which she pointed, and which, I found, covered a cavity in the wall, and thence drew forth a leathern bag, carefully tied up with twisted marram-grass, and directed to myself.

"There, lad," said Dame Goodram, "that's for thee, and many a day has that been laid up for 'ee. Take it, and look at it by-and-by, when I'm gone. And now," she added, as I put the bag—which, from its feel, I supposed to contain amber and agates—into my pocket, "light me a bit o' fire—there's a lot o' drift-wood behind the door—and let me burn this paper, and some more from the box thinder. I set store by 'em for long, but now their use is gone, for I can't take 'em yinder, where I'm a-going."

"What are they?" I asked, anxiously.

"Papers, lad, papers, o' no use to thee or anyone when I'm gone to the mole-country.* This that I hold is the register of the marriage of one whose son will never care to know his mother's name or his mother's kin, I'll be bound. Like father, like son. There, lad, take 'em and burn 'em.

I took the paper from her hand, and read it as I had done before.

"Dame," I said, "I knew a young man of the

* The grave.

name of Stephen Hartley, whose greatest sorrow it was that he didn't know his mother's name or family. His father, who was a musician at Mottlesham, has long been dead, and his mother——”

“Was my daughter, my own beautiful Rebecca,” interrupted the old woman, in thrilling tones.

“Yours!” I exclaimed; “then you are grandmother to my Stephen, who used to call me his brother. But are you sure?” I added, half-fearing that she was delirious.

“Sure!” she answered, sobbing aloud—“as sure as I'm alive now, and as sure as I've but a few hours left in this world. And so her son is alive, is he? and you know him? I'd like to see his face, lad; it's a brave, handsome one, I'll warrant. Go, Julian,” she added, impetuously; “what are you stopping for? Go at once and fetch him here.”

I told her that Stephen was far away, and that I did not know his present abode; and then I begged her to give me the copy of the register of his mother's marriage, and any other papers that might concern him, in order that I might convey them to him, should any opportunity occur. Dame Goodram complied, and then, after making me fetch her a drink of water, and after remarking that it was an ill thing to rip up old sores, she, with many a sob, and many a stop for breath, gave me a sketch of her history, of which the main features are as follows.



CHAPTER XV.

Dame Goodram's Story—Francesco of Italy—Stefano is dying—Rachel ! Rachel !—Brandersby Commons.

DAME GOODRAM was the only daughter of a well-to-do farmer and cattle-dealer at Wellingham Thorpe. Her father had some private property, but was given to drinking and gambling, and was a man of violent and headstrong temper. Her mother died while she was still an infant. The occupations of Ralph Wolstan, her father, were such as to carry him frequently from home. In consequence, as she grew up, she was left much to herself, and this the more so because her father would never permit any young men or girls of her own age and rank to enter the house. It thus fell out that she became attached to a young gipsy lad, of the Norfolk clan of Smith or Petulengro, whom she had chanced to meet in one of her walks. The young man returned her love, and they fled together. After remaining with his tribe sufficient time to overcome

their opposition to the match, and to have their sybbrit duly announced, they were married, and in due time she bore her husband a daughter. On the death of her gipsy husband—which took place in a penal colony, whither he had been transported for horse-stealing—she continued to live for some years with the tribe to which her husband had belonged. During the whole of this time she had no communication with her father, whose extravagant and dissolute habits were fast bringing him to ruin; but when her daughter Rebecca was about sixteen years old, she was herself called away suddenly by news that her father was dying. She flew to him at once, and nursed him until his death, which took place a month after her arrival. On her return (for her father bequeathed her nothing—he had, in fact, nothing to leave) to the gipsies, the first news which met her was that her daughter had disappeared, and had, as was supposed, run away with and married a young musician of Mottlesham, named Hartley. Her daughter Rebecca had been the very light of her eyes and the joy of her life, and this undutiful conduct—the very counterpart of her own behaviour to her own father—sank deep into her heart. Full of sorrow, she instituted inquiries, and ascertained that her Rebecca had been lawfully married. That was some consolation; but, although she procured and treasured up a copy of the mar-

riage register at Eyston, she steadfastly refused to see her daughter. In a few months Rebecca was no more. She died in the suburban parish of Heigham by Norwich, in giving birth to a son. That son was my long-lost Stephen. About two years after her daughter's death, Mrs. Smith, or Petulengro, married again. Her second husband, Cutty Goodram, was an old seaman and smuggler, brave, indeed, but utterly lawless and wicked. With him she lived unhappily for four years, and then a second time was left a widow. Goodram was drowned at sea. He fell overboard when engaged in a smuggling voyage to the coast of Holland. After her second husband's death, Dame Goodram came to live at Ernsey Tower, where I had first of all made her acquaintance.

Such was the substance of the old woman's story. When she had finished, she seemed tired and drowsy; but at length, after much pressing on my part, she consented to my proposal to fetch a doctor from Netheringham, a straggling village which lay about two miles inland. In less than half-an-hour I stood at the doctor's door, whereon was an immense brass plate inscribed, "DOLER, SURGEON." The owner of this name and profession was absent, and I was told that the time of his return was uncertain. If, however, he was not back in about an hour, he would probably not be home till night. I resolved

to wait, at all events for a short time, and accordingly wandered down the village and entered the churchyard, whereof the wall, like that of Cromer, if I rightly remember, was capped with the tracery of the once magnificent windows. Who can wonder, when such desecrations as these are done and permitted—and they *are* done and permitted in Norfolk even to this day—that the flame of true devotion should burn so low, or that the ignorant should clamour for the suppression of Archdeacons and other dignitaries of the Church? After examining the church, and frightening and being frightened by a worn-out donkey which was tied up in the north porch of the House of God, I strolled on towards the village ale-house, which, with an old gnarled sycamore in front, stood a little back from the main street. As I was about to enter, an olive-complexioned boy, with big black eyes, rushed out of the house with such violence as nearly to throw me down. He was crying bitterly, and his voice was choked with sobs, as, in broken English, he tried to ask pardon for having run against me. I spoke gently to him, and asked the cause of his grief.

"Signor," he answered, "I shall have no friends. Francesco will be left alone."

I felt flattered at being addressed as "Signor," and answered, "Yes, you must be very far from home. Where do you come from?"

"Genova."

"But in a few years you will go back home a rich man, and then you'll find all your friends, won't you?"

"Si, Signor," answered the boy's gentle voice, which fell like music upon my Northern ear.

"Why do you say, then, you will have no friends? and why are you so sorry?"

"Signor, my best friend in England, my friend Stefano, is dying. O Signor! I was ill in health, and he nursed me till I was well, and since we have been on travel together, oh, so far! But now, mio carissimo, Stefano is dying."

I was greatly moved by the young Italian's manner, but still more at that name, "Stefano." Stefano! Could it be my Stephen?

"What is your friend's name besides Stephen?" I asked; "is it Hartley?"

"Signor, I do not know; to me he is Stefano, mio amico carissimo; fratello mio."

"But where does he come from?" I continued. "Did he name any place he used to live at? Did he speak of no one he used to know, or wished to see?"

"No, Signor," answered the boy; "but in his sleep he calls for Rachel and Julian."

"Lead me to him," I cried; "I am Julian!"

One rapid glance of inquiry from the dark boy,

and then he trustingly put his delicate hand in mine, and, signing to me to step softly, he led me up a crazy stair. Then he opened a garret-door. I stepped in, and saw a figure, all white and thin, lying in uneasy slumber. It was Stephen—Stephen, my long-lost friend and brother!

The boy kneeled down beside the bed, and prayed aloud in his own soft language. I prayed standing, in silence. But I saw that life must be ebbing fast. The lips of the sick man moved. I bent down to catch the muttered words. They were these, “Rachel! Rachel!” And then I remembered that Rachel was even then, in all probability, on Brandersby Commons, and that Brandersby Commons could not be more than two or three miles from Netheringham. I dared not trust another to go for her, so, beckoning to the boy to follow me out of the room, I charged him, if Stephen should awake, to refrain from telling him that Julian had stood beside him. “I am going to call Rachel,” I added. The boy dried his tears—his love and sympathy were stronger than his sense of desolation and sorrow.

Brandersby Commons!—a long, long, sandy flat, covered with heath and ling and ever-flowering yellow furze and brakes, and dotted here and there with ancient barrows and strange circular pits arranged in groups, which antiquaries assert to be

the foundations of primitive Celtic dwellings—a long, long, sandy, yet elevated table-land, bounded on one side by dark straggling woods of Scottish firs, from whose company each here and there a giant stood forth out upon the heath, and on the other by fields of waving corn. Behind, was the ridge of sand-hills which girt the coast, and, save in one or two points, concealed the sea. In front, inland, a distance softened by purple haze, and afar off, like a dark spear against the azure firmament, the distant spire of the Cathedral Church of Norwich, pointing upwards to the glory-courts of Heaven. About me, a balmy, thyme-scented air, all thrilling with the songs of larks innumerable, with the short notes of restless whinchats, with the drowsy hum of bees, and with the monotonous chirpings of grasshoppers multitudinous. Such the peaceful, happy scene which seemed to soothe me, but brought no comfort to my heavy heart.

I ascended a barrow, the better to look round. No gipsy encampment, as I expected, no human being, could I descry. I lay down to rest upon the mound which may have covered the ashes of some Icenian warrior who fought with Boadicea against the stern, resistless Roman, and, shutting my eyes, I thought of Stephen and his Rachel, and earnestly I longed to be the means of bringing them together. Suddenly, a sound fell on my ears—a

well-known sound from distant, happier times—a plaintive voice singing a merry song. I listened, and could not be mistaken. It was Stephen's song to Rachel that I heard, and who but Rachel could be the singer? I rose and looked round, but there was no one in sight. I shouted, but was only answered by the wild cry of a wheeling plover. I shouted again, and then, rising from a barrow of like size with that on which I was posted, appeared a slight figure in red cloak and black-feathered, broad-brimmed hat. It was Rachel Petulengro. I hastened to meet her, and in as few words as possible told her all—all, and urged her to come with me at once to Netheringham Ship. Little persuasion did the poor girl need, and we set out in company at once.





CHAPTER XVI.

Just in Time—A Dark Past, a Fair Future—The Lovers—
The last, long Kiss—Now I am Happy—Fallen Asleep—
Gone Home.

WHEN we reached the ale-house, the Italian boy rushed forward. "Signorino," he cried, "Stefano is still asleep!"

We entered the house, and groped up the narrow staircase. Leaving Rachel outside the door, I went into the sick man's chamber, followed by the Genovese. As I neared the bed, Stephen's eyes opened, but he did not seem to know me.

"A dark past, a fair future, Stephen!" I whispered, as I leaned over the wasted form.

Stephen's large dark eyes glistened strangely as he answered hastily, "Ah, Julian boy, are you there? I've heard those words before—let's see, where was it?" And then a shade of sorrow passed over his face as he continued, "Ah! I remember; but that is a part of the dark past—dark enough,

Heaven knows! Julie, lad, I think I'm dying, but I say, God forgive her, as I do, though she did desert me."

"No, 'brother,'" I said, taking his thin, wasted hand in mine, "*she* did not—Rachel did not desert you. It was all a mistake: she loved you truly; she loves you most dearly still; she is here now, longing to see you, and to be your nurse till you get strong and well."

Stephen seemed to gasp for breath as he answered, faintly indeed, but with a deep thrill of joy perceptible in his tone, "God be thanked—bring her to me—quick, quick! lest I die before I see her."

I threw open the door, and in another moment he was clasped in her arms.

It was a strange, sad scene. The long, flowing black tresses of the girl, who seemed the very ideal of lithe grace and youthful beauty, mingled with the straight, uncombed, fair hair of the young man, whose pinched face of almost snowy whiteness contrasted like snow upon the heather with her dark countenance, as their lips met in a long, long, burning kiss.

"God be thanked, my Stephen!" said Rachel, when at length her greedy lips had parted from his.

"Amen," answered Stephen, firmly, for he seemed to have drawn in strength from her he loved—

"Amen ; I could not have died thinking you false.
Now I am happy."

There had been no word of explanation betwixt those two, but in the almighty strength of his great love all his suspicions, all his doubts, were removed, and a look of cheerful trust lit up his wan face, and beamed in his flashing eyes.

There was a gentle rap at the door. "It is Parson Charlesworth," said Stephen, faintly : "beg him to come in. Do you know, Rachel," he continued, "he has been here every day to read to me and pray, and I have opened my heart to him, and yesterday he gave me the Holy Sacrament, and I have found much comfort—yes, and much hope."

And the Priest of God entered. As he came in, Rachel rose.

"No, you must sit still, my Rachel," said Stephen; "Mr. Charlesworth knows all, and would have married us, if it had been God's will. Do you know, sir," he proceeded, turning to the clergyman, "*she* is come ? Thank God, sir, for this. Once more, let us pray."

As Stephen spoke, he leaned back his head upon the lap of Rachel, who sat at the bed-head, and closed his eyes. I kneeled down beside the Italian boy, but still retained Stephen's hand, which was now very cold, clasped in my own. Then in solemn tones the Priest of God's Church said some of the

prayers from the Prayer-book Office for the Visitation of the Sick. When he ceased, I looked up at Stephen. His eyes were still closed.

"He has fallen asleep," I said.

"Yes," answered the clergyman, "in JESUS. '*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.*'"

These, as I humbly hope and believe, were true words as so applied. Stephen's wanderings, and sorrows, and labours were at an end. He had been purified by suffering. He lay dead in the lap of his heart's "first-loved and best," and the friend who loved him with a strange but true love knelt at his side, and, according to the wish expressed in his last sad letter, my eyes were fixed on his, and I held his hand in mine. Dead, dead! And the afternoon summer sun lit up the pale, thin features; but on them rested a look of peace, almost of joy. Stephen was at rest. His poor harassed spirit had gone home to Him who receiveth the returning prodigal with wide-opened arms of Divine and Fatherly mercy—
Home—*Home!*





CHAPTER XVII.

The Flying Gull and the Flown Soul—The Rising Tide—
Doctor Doler—Francesco—Netheringham Ship.

N another hour I was on my way back to Ernsey Tower. The village doctor had left a message at his house, while I was at the Ship, that he would follow me in the course of the evening. Rachel, overwhelmed with grief, refused to return to her people, and for that night at least was to sleep at the Vicarage. Francesco, the little Genovese, was to remain at Netheringham until I should return in the morning, for I had resolved to watch by Dame Goodram through the night.

The sun was setting as I neared the sea, which glittered with fair lights of azure and red and gold, and as I approached the ruin, the wild rabbits which had come out to feed amongst the spiry tufts of marram-grass darted helter-skelter into their burrows in the sand-hills. High above me sang the larks, and soaring at an immense altitude above them

gleamed a waving line of snowy-breasted sea-mews. All things above, below, around were beautiful exceedingly, but a heavy weight and sense of solemn dread brooded over my mind. As I entered the Tower of Ernsey, the old gull, which I had left sitting over the bed-head, but which of old scarcely ever left his corner by the fire, met me at the door. When I had passed the threshold, I was started by a loud scream. I turned hastily, when, to my surprise, the huge bird spread his wide pinions, and, leaving the door-sill, flew out over the great sea, away, away, away, till, though I strained my eyes to the uttermost, I could see him no more. He had returned to his wild, free haunts, the heaving billows of the Northern main. Then, swift as lightning, the reason of his flight darted into my mind—the bird's mistress must surely be dead. It was even so. I rushed to the bed, and found—Dame Goodram's corpse. Her soul had flown away to the intermediate shadowland of mystery. Another of the few friends of my young life had passed away and gone! How death seemed to dog my footsteps! How did it seem to be my life-lot to look death in the face—to meet death at every turn! Sadly and slowly I closed the old woman's eyes, and covered the weird, shrunken body with the ragged patchwork counterpane. That office performed, I tried to sit down to rest and think, but the close, death-like atmosphere of the old tower

choked me. Anon I stood upon the beach. A fresh landward breeze was blowing from the sea, brine-scented, and exceeding sweet. As I watched the ceaseless play of the glorious ocean, monotonous, yet ever-changing, my deep depression imperceptibly vanished, and was succeeded by indefinable longings, and high determinations to make my own way. "What," I thought, "if I *do* stand alone? It is more noble to succeed by my own exertions than to depend on those of others. I have a power within to raise myself; rise I will." Alas! that to these high thoughts I added no prayer, but my heart, lifted up by the sweet influences of the good works of God, swelled high within me, and I was all unconscious of my own weakness. And thus fell the evening.

"Hallo! hallo!" The voice came from the Tower, and startled me as I ascended the beach.

"Hallo—o!" reiterated the voice; "can't you answer?"

"Hallo!" I returned. "What do you want? Who's there?"

"Want?" roared the voice, which as I approached I perceived to belong to the village doctor. "Want? That's a nice question to ask a man, and I may say a doctor—medical man, sir—who's shut up in a fusty old chest of a tower without light or lucifer, and who's just tumbled down on a clammy old corpse! Want, sir? It's like your impudence!"

I had some matches in my pocket, and feeling somewhat in the wrong for not having been on the spot, I hastened to the ruin, where I found the portly figure of the Doctor standing on the top rung of the ladder, undecided as to whether he should trust his corpulent person to the next step below him.

"Nice place to bring a medical man to, this, isn't it?" he began when I arrived. "Very nice place, I'm sure; *reyther* infested, I should suppose, with imps and cats and vampires and ghouls and ghosts, but still very nice, oh, very! To tumble down, too, on a dead witch is a pleasant adventure—oh, very—for those who like it, but somehow I don't. No accounting for tastes, is there?"

Thus the little fat Doctor ran on while I scrambled up the broken steps of the crazy ladder.

"Old lady not much used to visitors, I should imagine, from the look of the best staircase, and never used 'em herself, I'll be bound. Starting at once from the door-sill to take a flight on a broomstick is a very convenient mode of egress, very! Ha! ha! ha! But I beg your pardon; the excellent deceased, as the newspapers say—dead folks are always either saints or devils, one would suppose—the excellent deceased was perhaps a relative; not that I've ever heard she'd any—a species of great-grandmother, may be, or great-aunt over the left?"

I answered that Dame Goodram was no relation.

"No relation, eh?" bellowed the Doctor; "then why on earth, sir, did you come with a cock-and-bull story, frighten my cook-maid almost into fits, and decoy a doctor, sir—I may say a medical man—down to a ghastly old ruin to prescribe for a desiccated mummy? I'm surprised at you, sir—I really am."

The Doctor here fairly gasped for breath. Heavy as was my heart at my re-entrance into the abode of death, I could not but be amused at the way in which he ran on, and having apologised for being absent when he arrived, I told him that on my return from Netheringham I found that the old woman had breathed her last during my absence.

"And no wonder, sir," answered the Doctor; "she's been wasting away—I may say atrophising—these three months past, and she's now died of obstinacy, sheer pig-headed obstinacy, as I'd testify on oath before the County Coroner, if required. I met her one day and told her she'd die if she didn't call me in, and she couldn't, and didn't, and now she *is* dead, sure enough. I told her as a medical man she wanted something better than offal and dead fish—proper nourishment, sir—broth, porter, wine, arrow-root, chickens, sago—but she was as obstinate as a donkey, which *will* eat thistles. I knew it was no use *my* offering her anything, for the old lady had an independent spirit, and would never take alms; so I sent Mrs. Doler—very superior woman, sir, wife of

Doctor Doler—*my* wife, sir—with a basket of good things. And would you believe it? After breaking her neck nearly on that confounded ladder, and giving her the best advice—whitewash the walls, turn out old croaker the gull, take chamomile tea every morning forty minutes before breakfast, wear wash-leather over the pit of her stomach—after, I say, giving her the best advice, gratis, Mrs. Doler was turned out, literally *turned out*, and she a born Grimshaw, by this preposterous old harridan!"

I could not help feeling sorry to hear my old friend thus vehemently assailed; but I saw that the Doctor's bark was worse than his bite, and my heart warmed towards him on account of the genuine and disinterested kindness he had showed to the poor lonely old woman. I accordingly communicated to him my discovery that the young man he had been attending at Netheringham Ship was grandson to Dame Goodram. The Doctor seemed touched and interested, and, promising to send a woman from the nearest cottage to lay out the body, he offered me a seat in his gig, which was awaiting his return in a lane behind the sand-hills. As we jogged along between the high banks of heaped-up earth, grass-grown and surmounted by low hedges odorous with honeysuckle and sweetbriar, Dr. Doler told the particulars of Stephen's illness. He had arrived at Netheringham nearly a month before, carrying a heavy barrel-organ,

and evidently far gone in consumption. The night after his arrival he burst a blood-vessel. The doctor had been summoned to his bed-side by Francesco, the Italian boy, who refused to leave the friend with whom he had travelled for some time, and who, he said, had nursed him like a brother through a dangerous illness. By night Francesco watched and tended Stephen as he lay a-dying, while through great part of the hot days he scoured the country with his hurdy-gurdy and guinea-pigs to earn a few halfpence wherewith to support himself.

"Mrs. Doler," said the Doctor, "like all other women, cottoned to the young foreigner, and insisted on his getting his breakfast in our kitchen every morning. And one day I found our cook-maid, who hadn't been with us a week, turning the hurdy-gurdy, while my lad Thomas danced a jig with the housemaid. I told 'em if I saw such goings-on again I'd turn 'em all off, neck and crop."

"And did you?" I asked.

"Why, no," replied the Doctor; "to tell you the truth, I didn't, though I caught 'em at it again; the cook was footing it that time. It was weak, I know, confoundedly weak; but somehow I couldn't bear to stop their kindness to the poor lad, who was setting us all such a good example in the Damon and Pythias line, and so I ran the chance of being laughed at."

The night was far advanced when we reached Netheringham, as we had to go some miles to leave some medicines at a remote farm-house near the coast, and the lanes were heavy with sand, which, in windy weather, drifted inland from the "meals" or sand-dunes. On the way I told the Doctor as much as I thought needful about my early friendship with Stephen, about my chance meeting with Rachel Petulengro, and about my bringing them together just before he died. While this recital was going on, the Doctor kept bursting out into violent fits of coughing, and once he leaped out of the gig on the pretext that he saw a glow-worm. Now the Doctor had no more a cough than I had, and the glow-worm I believe to have been non-existent. The fact is, the good Doctor did not wish me to hear that he was sobbing.

When at length we got back, this was the scene that met my eyes. The garret of Netheringham Ship. The corpse of Stephen, the glorious singer of Handel and Haydn, Mozart and Mendelssohn, Tallis and Purcell, laid out under a white sheet, the face uncovered. Kneeling by it, still in her scarlet cloak, with her black tresses falling on the coverlet, Rachel Petulengro, the Romany girl. In a corner, Francesco the Genovese, asleep, his head resting on his hurdy-gurdy. Above him, on a chair, a tiny image of the Virgin Mother and the Holy Child, the gift, doubt-

less, of a fond mother or dark-eyed sister in the sunny Italian land of the Riviera. Beside the boy, his two white guinea-pigs, moving their heads restlessly to and fro as they munched a lettuce. The window open seawards, and through it the quiet sky of the summer night studded with stars innumerable. Below-stairs, a confused noise of talking, laughing, and singing, and of dead Stephen's old battered organ, which a countryman, rather the worse for beer, was monotonously grinding to the tune of the Old Hundredth Psalm. Such the scene on my return to Netheringham.

I sat beside the dead for nearly an hour, when the door opened and Mr. Charlesworth entered, accompanied by Dr. Doler. The former, motioning us to kneel down, offered up some solemn prayers suitable to the occasion. But my thoughts wandered far away, and I only contrasted the solemn tones of the great organ, rolling amidst the Norman pillars, and thundering along the fretted roof of the Cathedral Church, with those of the old grinding-organ in the tap-room below. God knows there was a deep lesson in that contrast, if I could have learned it; and I read it in after-times, but not then.

After prayer, the kindly priest, taking poor Rachel by the hand, told her that his sister at the Vicarage was waiting for her, and would receive her cordially. Then Dr. Doler offered me a bed at his own house.

"Ground room, sir—skeleton in the corner cupboard—fine study—not object—we're wonderfully and beautifully made! Mrs. Doler, sir, in bed by now, or charmed to welcome—like all born Grimshaws, sir, nervous system a little overtasked by excitement. Francesco, to breakfast—there, no refusal!" Thus I was hurried downstairs by the hospitable Doctor, and, worn out, I speedily retired to rest and to sleep.





CHAPTER XVIII.

The Battle of Prag—VIBGORY—The Grimshaws—Burial of the Dead—Rachel at the Grave—Farewell.

YTHREE blank, weary, weary days! Thanks to the kindness of Dr. Doler, I slept nightly at his house. Each morning, breakfast over, I visited the silent room of death at the Ship, and noticed that to the last there was a peaceful smile upon the lips of him who lay there all cold and still. During the day, I wandered on the beach or lay on the sand-hills listening to the music of the waves, but I never again entered the 'old Tower of Ernsey. At night I came back to Netheringham to the house of the Doctor, who, on his return from his rounds, was always in a great glow of spirits. After tea-supper, Mrs. Doler, a fat, good-natured, affected little woman from Mottlesham, used to sit down to an old piano, and invariably prefixing the remark, "Ah, Cloughton, it's a fine thing to have a soul for music!" would set to work to play for my especial benefit. I cannot

say that this good lady's performance was "very inspiring," as she called it, of anything except fits of laughter, into which I had difficulty to restrain myself from bursting, when I saw her yellow turban—for such was the awful head-gear that she wore—and false flaxen ringlets nodding in time to the "Battle of Prag" and "Tullochgorum." While, however, she was thus careful to amuse me as best she might, Mrs. Doler did not neglect to cultivate my mind.

" You see, Cloughton—I drop the 'Mr.' as it's more friendly—you see that it's of the utmost use always to be able to lay your hand on the very, very thing you want, intellectually as well as physically, as Doler would say."

" Very much so, Ma'am."

" And therefore, Cloughton—you are not offended with my apparent familiarity, I hope—in connection with this idea, I have instituted, if I may use the expression, I have instituted a manuscript book of general stenographic reference. For instance, you see a rainbow—'the rainbow's watery span'—as the poet has it. Some one—which intellectual persons moving in certain spheres are perpetually doing—some one asks, 'What are its tints ? what are its colours ?' I at once turn to the word 'rainbow' in the index, find the page, and there's the explanation, and in one word—one beautiful word, VIBGORY !"

"VIBGORY!" cried I, in amazement.

"Yes, Cloughton, VIBGORY; don't you see? V.I.B.G.O.R.Y.—Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Orange, Yellow, and Red; no, Red and Yellow. Was ever anything more lucid? The initials, you perceive, V.I.B.G.O.R.Y."

"Very curious indeed, Ma'am," answered I, in great perplexity, and strongly disposed to question the correctness of the colours.

"But take another instance," cried Mrs. Doler, triumphantly—"take another instance. Let's see. It's a perfect *shiny quanum*, as Doler would say—though why he should use such Greek expressions is a mystery I cannot penetrate; it's a perfect *shiny quanum* for all persons moving in certain spheres—and it's no disparagement to you, Cloughton, that you *don't move* in them—to be *o'currants*, as the French have it, with the names of the Wise Men of the East. Now look at 'Wise Men,' and there you have it, SOSOBIN—Solomon, Solon, Bacon, Newton—vowels don't count, you see—Poh!—not that, but—; well, here it is, GOMOB—Gaspar, Melchior, Baltazar. Was ever anything more complete?"

And thus Mrs. Doler would run on with fifty subjects, ranging from the discovery of America to the introduction of vaccination, until my brain was so confused I scarcely knew whether I was standing on my head or my heels. At ten she retired for the

night, and then Dr. Doler kicked off his boots, lighted his pipe, and talked incessantly between the whiffs until half-past eleven, when he followed his spouse to bed.

“Superior woman that!” ejaculated the Doctor, pointing with the waxed end of his pipe in the direction of the room to which his lady had ascended; “mighty superior woman, but then she’s a born Grimshaw, and all the Grimshaws are superior people, although proud as Lucifer !”

“Are they indeed ?” I replied.

“Fact,” said the Doctor, “proud as Lucifer, although General Ironmongers. There’s but one exception to the rule of universal proudness, and you’ve seen it—Mrs. Doler! Do you know, sir, they wouldn’t let her marry Jack Doler ?”

“Wouldn’t they really ?” I answered.

“Fact, sir. So we made a runaway match of it. Very wrong, but we did it; and though I wouldn’t let it be generally known, I’d do it again to-morrow. Jack Doler, sir, was a young man then, fresh from the hospitals, and had little practice, and the head of the Grimshaws owned half Mottleshaw, and had built an Independent meeting-house because he couldn’t have two pews to himself in the Parish Church, and couldn’t bear to sit next a brother Christian who was a moulder; conscientious dis-senter, you see ! We made a runaway match of it,

I say, and then came back to beg forgiveness, and all that sort of thing."

"And did they forgive you, sir?" I asked.

"Why, I can't say they did, though we were mortal hard put to it to live. But they came round at last, like good Christians. The fact was, an old aunt of mine, from whom I expected nothing, died suddenly, and left me this house and as nice a bit of land round it as can be found in all the county of Norfolk, and five or six thousand pounds. And, would you believe it, the very next day after the will was read, a note came from Mrs. Doler's eldest sister, Constantia Grimshaw, to say what a blessed thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and that for her part she was willing to forgive me for marrying her poor, dear, deluded sister, and to make friends, like a truly pious person and real believer, and that she would show her forgiving disposition by allowing herself to be taken on a trip to North Wales. And she went with us, too," added the Doctor, laughing till the room shook again, "which was very like a true Christian, wasn't it?"

But my host's favourite topics of conversation were physiology, phrenology, and races of men. Upon these subjects he was very discursive. Mrs. Doler, he informed me, like all other born Grimshaws, was an "unmitigated Dane," while I, who had dark-grey eyes and brown curling hair, was

alleged to have possessed ancestors either in Sleswick or in the Feroe Isles, he could not positively say which without an examination of my skull inside as well as out, an operation which, howsoever desirable for scientific purposes, I was obliged to postpone.

At length Saturday came, a warm, damp, still day, with a grey pall of misty heat-clouds spread over the sky. And then Dame Goodram and Stephen Hartley, grandmother and grandson, parted in life, were buried side by side in the churchyard of Netheringham. The Curate of the parish, Mr. Charlesworth (the Rector was non-resident), read the solemn service of the English Church for the Burial of the Dead. There were present at the funeral only Rachel Petulengro, accompanied by the Curate's sister, Francesco, and myself. When all was over, I prepared to proceed to Yarmouth with the little Italian.

Poor Rachel refused to return to her tribe, and for the present was to remain at the Parsonage. I should perhaps mention that I was anxious to devote a part or all of the ten pounds given me by Ulla Borgen to defray the funeral expenses of Stephen and the old dame. This, however, was needless, as Stephen, in full expectation of his early departure, had placed a sufficient sum for his decent burial in the hands of Mr. Charlesworth, and an old purse

containing a few pounds was found by the woman who laid out Dame Goodram's body in Ernsey Tower, and had by her, with great honesty, been handed over to the authorities of the parish.

When I had taken a thankful leave of Dr. and Mrs. Doler, I again repaired to the churchyard. There, beside the newly-heaped mound, sat poor Rachel. She rose as I approached, and after I had gazed a while on the grave which contained all that was mortal of her heart's treasure, and had turned to go, she rose and accompanied me to the gate. She spoke not, but silently kissed my lips. Then we parted—she to return to the grave of her early and only love, I to join Francesco, who was in waiting at a turn of the road with his own guinea-pigs and hurdy-gurdy and my knapsack.

I never saw Rachel Petulengro again. Soon after my departure she disappeared, but what became of her no one could discover. It was ascertained that she was living with no tribe of the great East Anglian clan of gipsies.



CHAPTER XIX.

The "Admiral Nelson"—Cutty, lad—Scottish Presbyterian Consistency—"Amen," said the Foal"—Dirge on a Dead Mother—The Schoolmaster's MS.

SOON after leaving Netheringham, Francesco and I crossed the sand-dunes and descended to the beach, where, the tide being out, we walked far out upon "the ribbed sea-sand." In places the sand gave place to tracts of black, peaty-looking soil, in which were embedded, apparently *in situ*, the trunks of huge trees, with their larger branches lying around them. Beds like those on the Norfolk coast, as I afterwards discovered, frequently produce the bones and tusks of the mastodon and elephant, the horns of the elk and of several kinds of deer, freshwater shells, and the wing-cases of several species of insects in a marvellous state of preservation.

On the present occasion, however, we had no time to search for fossil remains. We passed several hamlets near the coast, but, except at Gatwick

Hithe, where we took tea, we did not go up to visit them, as I was anxious to reach Salburn, where I proposed to sleep and rest over the next day, which was Sunday. We arrived at our destination shortly after sunset, when Francesco began to dance and to play his hurdy-gurdy to a mingled assembly of farm-lads and fisher-boys, of whom the former wore brown linen smocks, curiously worked and bound by a leathern girdle round the waist, or brown velveteen coats and gaiters; and the latter, blue jerseys, caps of scarlet worsted or dark fur, or yellow sou'-westers. Meanwhile, I went to secure beds at the "Admiral Nelson," an old-fashioned public-house in the main street of the long "spraggling" village. After supper, Francesco went to bed, but I sat for long in a corner listening to the converse of the customers. In that remote place there seemed to be little or no separation of classes. The wealthier did not sit apart swigging spirits while the poorer took their beer by themselves, but here all sat together, and all, with one exception, drank wholesome home-brewed English ale. Some of the company seemed to be small yeomen and tenant farmers, some fishermen, some village tradesmen, and some labourers; one looked like a coachman out of place; and then there was a preventive man, the blacksmith, a pale, worn-looking schoolmaster, with whom I had much talk, the parish clerk, and

a travelling bagman from Scotland, who imbibed gin and water copiously. The two last-named personages had a long altercation, which was provoked by the bagman's assertion that "there was na mair veetal religion in Salburn than in his snuff mull"—a position which he maintained with great pertinacity (he being more than half-drunk at the time), on the sole ground that he had seen some lads bathing from the beach on the last Lord's Day evening. The old clerk, in a shrill treble, backed up by the blacksmith in a deep bass, denying the moral turpitude of sea-bathing after the conclusion of Divine service, and declining to vouch for the final destruction of the bathers, was denounced by his opponent as a "Pawkish gowk," and as a "radically profane pairson;" at which juncture the contest was brought to an abrupt close by the Scotsman falling forward on the table and going off into a drunken sleep.

"Blamed if that there chap don't beat a ranty preacher holler in sarmons and drinking!" said the stoutest farmer present, speaking for the first and last time during the evening, as he took his pipe out of his mouth, waved it slowly in the air, and then looked round for admiration.

By-and-by, a tall, haggard-looking man came in and sat moodily down by the empty fire-place. A dozen mugs were pushed towards the new-comer, and "How's Cutty, lad?" was the general question.

“Only rather of the ratherinest,” was the man’s answer—“only rather of the ratherinest. If I or his mother could nuss him, he might once more be much of a muchness, poor boy, and might chance to rub through the fever, but t’ Castle’s a bad hospital, a main bad un, that it be. And he to be shut up along of shooting at a hare on his own father’s ‘lotment! Poor lad, what a grinding shame it be!”

“Ay, ay, shame indeed; but Sir Topping’s a hard man!” was the reply, as many a rough hand seized that of the poor father, whose son had been sent to gaol, and *confined in the same cell with a burglar*, for shooting *at* a hare in his father’s garden, on the confines of the estates of Sir Topping Rosebury! That, I fear, was no uncommon fate for young men in Norfolk at that period, and, to judge by newspaper reports, it is no uncommon fate still.

Oh! what have the bishops and country clergy been about these many years past, that they should have suffered, without protest, the demoralisation and degradation of their flocks by these Game Laws—laws, if less bloody, not less unjust in principle than the old Forest Laws from whence they sprung? What madness, too, possesses the farmers, that they should persist in electing representatives to Parliament who support laws which are such a pregnant source of waste and loss and annoyance?

When this scene was over, and after the bereaved

father had gone away, there was some singing, one of the songs being the production of a carpenter of a neighbouring parish. The plan of this piece of "village art" was curious. An old white mare, grazing with her foal in a churchyard, and finding the church door open, went in, and, ascending the pulpit, preached a sort of satirical discourse on the different parochial functionaries, one verse being devoted to each individual. At the end of each verse, the foal, which was represented as occupying the clerk's desk, responded with a loud "Amen." For instance, the concluding couplet of a stanza which set forth the dishonest propensities of the carrier—evidently a very unpopular character—ran thus—

"And I wish that his cart may get into a hole,
I wish it, I du——'Amen,' said the Foal !
FOAL !"

the word "Foal" at the end being repeated, in Norfolk country fashion, at the end of each verse in a louder voice, the singer, with a rapid circular movement, turning himself away from the company, and then facing round towards them again.

During the singing of this song, which was greeted with much applause, an old, half-witted-looking labourer came in, and was presently assailed by numerous demands that he would sing a song

which he had made on his dead mother. After a long-continued, but evidently only a pretended resistance, and the remark that "it worn't a song arter all, but an epitaph like," he at length complied, and, with a curious leer upon his puckered countenance, sang the following to a tune also of his own unassisted composition—

“ She's up of the clouds,
Where the old Mare shrouds,
And her tail hangs wig, with a why, why, why :
With a Rat tail,
And a Ring bell,
And a Dow,
And a Row,
And a Row, Dow, Dow, Dow,
DOW.”

Moderato.

She's up of the clouds where the old Mare shrouds, And her
tail hangs wig with a why, why, why : With a
Rat tail, and a Ring bell, And a
cres. ff
Dow, and a Row, and a Row, Dow, Dow, Dow.

Just before closing time, the schoolmaster pulled out a MS. from the pocket of his threadbare coat, and begged me to accept it and read it at my leisure, as, he said, there was no one in Salburn who cared about such matters. The MS. contained the story of Lodbrok and Biorn, which, as bearing on an interesting episode in East Anglian history, I will give verbatim in the next chapter.





C H A P T E R X X.

Lodbrok and Biorn: a Legend of East Anglia.

IT was scarcely six o'clock, yet the last meal was
finished in the hall of the royal palace of
Redeham, which years—many years—ago was a
hunting-seat of the old English Kings of East
Anglia. Draining the last drop of ale from a golden
goblet of rude workmanship, King Eadmund arose
and went forth from the hall upon the natural
terrace which stretched along the low cliff of sand
and gravel upon which the palace, if such it might
be called, was built. The King's house was a long,
low pile, plainly but massively constructed of flints,
while here and there, in the substructure, courses of
long red tiles told that the building had been founded
by Roman hands; and at one end of the terrace
stood a huge circular tower of brick and rubble,
which of old time had been a Roman pharos. The
view which lay before the eyes of Eadmund the
King was fine and wild. The morning had been

stormy, and fleecy clouds had been drifting across the sky, but now the red rays of the setting sun cast a lurid gleam over the wide estuary of the boisterous Gar, and on the wild heaths and tangled woods which spread out in wide expanse upon the farther shore. Opposite the royal dwelling, the estuary, sweeping down from the upper country, divided itself into two branches, one of which trended towards the east and south, and the other towards the north and west. On the opposite shore, near the division of the estuary, rose the ruinous but massive walls and round flanking-towers of the Roman Station and Castle of Garianonum, now known as Burgh Castle. The estuary itself was troubled, and large waves, driven by a north-west wind, broke with sullen murmur at the foot of the low cliff of Redeham. At the present time the scene is of a far different character; the sea has retired and the estuary has silted up, and now the eye ranges over a vast plain of rich grass-land, grazed by countless herds, and permeated by the still lordly river Yare, and its tributaries, the pleasant Waveney and the Bure.

King Eadmund's eyes had long been fixed on a distant object which appeared tossing about on the waves near Garianonum. At length the King turned and addressed Tostig, a powerful East Anglian Eorl who was in attendance: "I can no

longer doubt," said he, "yon floating object is a boat, but one of a fashion which we have not amongst all our galleys; haste, Eorl, and command Biorn and Sihtric that they depart, and return not without bringing yon strange craft into our harbour." While Tostig hastened to perform his errand, Eadmund added to himself—"It misgives me if yonder boat do not belong to the Northmen of Denmark, whose vessels, I have heard, are, like this, black and long." As the King spoke these words, the sun sank down into a bank of haze, and in a few minutes black clouds had gathered over the whole sky.

The King shuddered, he knew not why, and re-entered the palace, where he sat down near his kinswomen, the Ladies Eanfleda and Cunethrith, before the great fire which burned in the hall. Behind stood the noble maidens who waited on the two princesses, and the various thanes and officers of the royal suite. At the lower end of the same hall, and separated only by a curtain of rough needlework, a number of inferior officers and servants crowded round a burning brazier, and listened to the wild strains of a gleeman, who, harp in hand, sang of the deeds of Woden, King Eadmund's god-ancestor. The Christian English folk of that period still loved to hear of the acts of prowess which their fore-elders had dared and done in the wild, fierce days of heathen times.

In about two hours after the King's entrance, the ladies rose to retire. At that moment a stir was heard outside, and an instant afterwards, Biorn, the King's huntsman, entered the hall, flushed and excited. Biorn was a strange personage. He was the son of the ceorl Godric of Ernestuna, and owed his advancement to his having saved the King's life in a boar-hunt. In stature he was short and thick-set, with a bull-neck, and his frame was of immense strength. His face was well-nigh concealed by immense masses of coarse red hair, from which peered out a pair of deep-set, piercing, greenish eyes. He was dressed in a dark-coloured tunic of coarse linen, curiously embroidered, and clasped by a circular brooch set with ruby-coloured glass or garnets, and wore a leathern girdle about his waist, from which depended a pouch, a hunting-knife, and three or four javelins. On Biorn's left shoulder sat a falcon hooded, and attached by a thong of skin to the belt. As he entered, the King rose. "Ha, Biorn!" he exclaimed, "hast thou secured that strange vessel and its crew? Quick! tell us whence they came. I'd wage my golden drinking-cup they are from the North."

Biorn bowed low before he answered. "My lord," said he, "I know not whence the boat came, nor how it came, seeing there was but one man on board, and she had no sail, and but one oar."

“Bring him hither,” cried King Eadmund; “we will ourselves see and examine the stranger.”

“My lord,” replied Biorn, “he who alone came hither is spent with cold and weariness, and, I fear, will never hear my lord’s gracious words.”

“Is he dead, then ?” interrupted the Lady Cunethrith; “speak, Biorn, is he dead ?”

“I know not, lady,” was the reply; “he is at least insensible.”

“Ho, there !” thundered King Eadmund; “bring hither the stranger into our presence. There are eyes here,” he added, turning courteously to his kins-women, “which should rekindle the spark of life.”

In a few moments a noble form was borne into the hall and laid before the hearth. It was that of a man of some forty years of age. He was immensely tall, and strength and activity seemed equally blended in his well-knit frame and limbs. Long curls of light brown, still untouched by grey, mingled with a beard and moustachios of the same or slightly lighter colour, which, wet and tangled as they were, well-nigh concealed the pale but noble features of a more than usually powerful and striking face. The dress in which the seemingly-dead person was habited was a hunting suit of leather, made something in the fashion of a Highland kilt, and fastened with silver brooches of intricate interlacing work enriched with uncut gems. On the breast was

embroidered in black horse-hair and silver the raven of Woden, the silver in some lights shining as the breast of the real bird does beneath the rays of the sun. Round the neck hung a golden collar, whose twisted circles of gold interlaced around bracteates of the same precious metal. These thin plates were stamped in rude imitation of coins of the Byzantine Emperors. The legs were encased in buskins or trousers of rough embroidered leather, which extended up the thighs.

No sooner had the bearers laid their burden on the ground than the two ladies approached, and, as was the use in those more simple days, began, without either affectation or bustle, to rub the hands and apply warm cloths to the damp body. Ere very long, their gentle care was rewarded by the return of the sufferer to consciousness, and at length by the opening of his eyes. He soon tried to speak, but the effort was too great, and he again became unconscious. In this state he was conveyed to a couch which had been prepared for him, where he soon rallied, and after partaking of some warming drinks made from restorative herbs mingled with wine, he soon sank into a calm sleep. Then, but not before then, the Ladies Eanfleda and Cunethrith retired to rest. As the latter passed Biorn, she desired him to see that the stranger was in want of nothing.

"Ten thousand fiends!" was his muttered reply, as the lady departed.

To account for this forcible exclamation, it will be necessary to explain that Biorn had viewed with secret rage the interest which the Lady Cunethrith had taken in the recovery of the stranger. Biorn, in truth, loved her, and ceorl as he was by birth, and hideous as he was in appearance, he aspired, although secretly, to her hand. Some years back, a certain Guthlac, who was hump-backed, had wooed and won the daughter of one Eorl Osberht, and Biorn argued thus within himself, "it was impossible that Guthlac had been married for his beauty, therefore he must have been married for his possessions;" and, fully admitting his own personal ugliness—of which, indeed, he was painfully conscious—Biorn could not see why he should not win the Lady Cunethrith, seeing that he was lord of many fair manors already, and might hope for many more from the hands of the grateful King Eadmund.

Next morning's light found the stranger perfectly recovered, and, presenting himself before the King, he announced himself to be Regner Lodbrok, a Prince of Denmark.

Lodbrok had been early married. His bride was Thora of Norway, celebrated by many a scald as Thora of the Golden Locks. The burden of a song of Erik's ran—

“O Birch, thou art most beautiful,
Thy drooping boughs of early green are fair,
Yet canst thou not comparèd be,
O Birch, with Thora of the golden hair !”

With this lady, who bore him three fair and stalwart sons, Lodbrok lived with far more of domestic happiness than was usual in those days amongst the Northern nations of Europe. At last Thora, the young, the beautiful, died, and was buried by the side of the sea on the headland of Stangness. To Lodbrok the shock was terrible. He who of old was the foremost in every warlike game, whose merry laugh was always the cheeriest at the banquet, became moody and recluse. His sole amusement was hawking, and, with his falcon seated on the prow, Lodbrok would, day after day, without any attendant, guide his boat amongst the fiords and islets which were the favourite resorts of the heron and stork. It was while he was upon one of these solitary excursions that, when far from land, he was overtaken by the storm, which had at length driven him across the Northern sea to the coast of East Anglia.

At the end of Lodbrok’s narration, King Eadmund embraced his princely guest, and swore that, when he should desire to leave his Court, he would send him back with a retinue suitable to his rank, and in all honour, to his Danish fatherland. Lodbrok then

inquired the circumstances of his rescue, and hearing that his preservers had been under the command of Biorn, he took his golden collar from his neck and threw it around that of the huntsman. Upon this the King, perceiving the movement, appointed Biorn to be the principal attendant on his guest during his stay. Lodbrok remained some months at the Court of King Eadmund, winning favour from all, and from none more than from the Lady Cunethrith.

It is the beginning of February. King Eadmund is preparing a gallant array of ships, for, early in May, his noble guest, Regner Lodbrok, is to return to his Northern home, taking with him the Lady Cunethrith as his bride. Lodbrok, too, ere that, is to abjure his belief in Woden and the other deities of the Scandinavian mythology, and is to embrace the faith of Christ.

All this, of course, is exceedingly grievous to Biorn, yet he wavers not in his fidelity to his new master, into whose favour he has so much ingratiated himself, that, with King Eadmund's leave, he is to return with him to Denmark. It is the beginning of February, and, early in a cold, windy morning, Biorn, who always sleeps in an antechamber at his master's door, rises, and, entering the apartment, bends over the sleeping Regner. See what hate glances from the green eyes of the servant! How he clutches his dress as if feeling for some weapon!

But mark again, what a humble, servile look he has put on! He speaks, and his harsh voice is low and respectful. "Wake up, my lord, the morning is fair, and if thou wilt wend to the heronry at the Eyo of Alvarsgat, by noon thou shalt lay thy spoils at the feet of the Lady Cunethrith."

In half-an-hour Lodbrok, ever eager for the chase, had left the palace of Redeham with his attendant (alas! for one of the two it was for the last time), and was soon speeding over the broad surface of the estuary, which the ruddy light of early dawn was beginning to illuminate. As they neared the little isle of Alvarsgat, Biorn suddenly exclaimed, "See, my lord, see yonder! yonder noble heronshaw intends to settle—he is making for the isle!" Lodbrok turned his head to the quarter indicated; in another moment he was hurled from the boat by the strong arm of Biorn, who sprang upon him with a fierce execration. The tide was running out fast, and Regner Lodbrok was carried down some yards before he rose to the surface; then he struck out boldly for the boat, but seeing the burly form of Biorn rising above the bulwarks and threatening him with an oar, he turned himself towards the islet, and soon had made such progress that the huntsman became alarmed.

"What if he, after all, escape me?" he cried, and applied himself to the oars. In a few minutes he

had neared the fugitive. Lodbrok saw that escape was impossible. He raised himself up in the water. "Alas, my Cunethrith!" he exclaimed, and then (for in the agony of mind produced by exhaustion and the certainty of a shameful death by menial hands, he forgot the mild maxims of the faith he was about to embrace) he added, turning to the boat, "Strike home, base ceorl, and slay thy lord, and on you, O my sons, on you I call for vengeance upon this villain!" At this moment his utterance was stopped, for an oar, wielded by the strong arm of Biorn, crashed upon his head, and the green waters closed over the bravest of the Northmen. At the same instant a wild cry was heard, a kind of long-drawn, unearthly screech. Biorn trembled to such an extent that he could not keep his feet, and was fain to sit down at the stern of the boat. In another minute a flight of huge grey birds arose from the Eyot, and slowly flew towards the rising sun. Biorn was reassured; "it was the herons," he thought, and then his green eyes glistened as he spake aloud, "Ah, he is dead now; flow out, swift tide, and bear his body back to his accursed race; and now for a plunge, for I tried to save his life when he fell overboard—aha, to save him!" So speaking, Biorn plunged into the water. As he rose, something touched him, and, regaining the surface, he found himself face to face with the pale corpse of his
o

victim, which displayed a huge bloody scar across the head and face. Such was Biorn's horror, that, though he grasped the edge of the boat, he could scarcely retain his hold; in another minute, however, his cupidity conquered all other feelings. Seizing the body, he tore from around the neck a golden chain, the gift of the Lady Cunethrith, and then, pushing the body from him, he clambered into the boat, and proceeded to row hastily homewards. Not once did he venture to look behind him, lest he should behold the pale features of the murdered prince above the waves; had he done so, he would have seen a small shallop put off from the Eyot of Alvarsat, which he had deemed uninhabited, and the drowned body rescued from the tide by a tall figure dressed in monkish garb. Then, perhaps, it would have struck him that the wild cry he had heard was that of a man rather than a bird.

When Biorn gained the shore at Redeham, he dared not approach the King, but sent Sihtric, one of the royal attendants, to break the news of the death of the Dane by drowning. Eadmund at once summoned Biorn to his royal presence, and, with unaffected grief, heard the false tale of the crafty huntsman, who pointed to his still wet garments, and painted his own efforts to save the drowning prince in glowing colours. Then the King retired to bear the tragic news to the Lady Cunethrith.

The blow was heavy and the shock great, but Cunethrith yielded not to it; on the contrary, her spirit seemed to nerve itself to the emergency. "There has been foul murder," she cried; "let Biorn be summoned." Biorn came in fear and trembling, and repeated the same false tale as before. When he lauded his own attempts to save Regner's life, the excitement of the lady became fearful to witness. She rushed up and down with kindled eyes and dilated form. "Base wretch!" she exclaimed; "wretch and coward of heart, better hadst thou have perished than returned without thy lord! Even," she continued in a softer tone, "it had been something hadst thou brought his body home for Christian burial; but now the wild sea-birds and fish must tear his flesh from his bones."

At that instant an attendant entered, and, with an obeisance, informed the King that the Hermit Redwald had arrived with tidings of the drowned prince, and demanded instant audience.

"Bring him hither," cried Eadmund, "and let all leave us except the Lady Cunethrith, Earl Osberht, and Biorn."

Presently the Monk Redwald entered the presence. He was a striking figure—tall, dark, sun-stained, with a cross-staff of some Eastern wood, perchance of an olive-tree from far-off Bethlehem or Gethsemane, clutched between his emaciated fingers,

Redwald was the son of an officer of the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine Emperor, and of Irene, a lady of that luxurious Court. He inherited the undaunted bravery of the one, and the subtle intellect of the other parent. His early life, spent in the voluptuous atmosphere which surrounded him, was wild and gay. Aroused by the near approach of death, in a fever with which he had been attacked in consequence of his excesses, he vowed that, if he should recover, he would retire from the world. His life was spared, and his first action, upon recovery, was to repair to the Holy City of Jerusalem, where he visited the scenes of the Saviour's Life and Passion. On his return, he passed through Egypt, and there became acquainted with certain ascetic enthusiasts, the successors of the Hermit-Saints Antony and Paul, at that time still common in the East. Persuaded by their example to practise more than ordinary self-denial, he retired to the Northern country of his father's birth, and, first in a ruined tower of the Roman fortress of Garianonum, and afterwards at intervals in the still more remote and inaccessible Isle of Alvarsgat, he led a life of the most rigid mortification.

As Redwald entered, he saluted the King with grace and reverence, and then, lifting up his tall and still noble form to its full height, he turned his piercing eyes upon the shrinking Biorn.

"Thou art a murderer!" he cried.

"Thou liest, false dreamer!" was the reply.

"But I can prove it," said the other; "for I saw thee strike thy lord with these eyes."

Biorn for a moment seemed lost in thought. "But I was alone," he muttered, "and he fell overboard."

"Ha!" interrupted the King, "thou wast alone; we were blinded not to have thought of that. Speak on, good Redwald."

But Redwald turned away, and then a strange, wild, prolonged cry resounded through the hall. The King started, but Biorn turned pale; his assurance vanished, his legs tottered beneath him, he sank upon the ground. The cry he heard was that which had fallen on his ears as the waters closed over the head of his victim. Redwald bent over him, and, tearing open his vest, drew out a golden chain.

"My gift to the prince!" shrieked the Lady Cunethrith. "Oh, my Lord King! I cry to thee for justice—I cry to thee for vengeance."

Biorn was instantly arrested, and, his guilt being clearly proved by the testimony of the hermit, who had witnessed the murder from his temporary cell upon the Eyot, the King passed sentence of death upon him, and charged Earl Osberht with its execution. Biorn, heretofore so bold and assured, now flung himself upon the ground, and, grovelling like some fell reptile in the dust, besought mercy at

the hands of Eadmund. The King, remembering that, erewhile, he had owed his life to Biorn, seemed moved. At length he spoke. "Wretch, thou hast in part prevailed, for it beseems not a King to forget past services. We will not ourselves doom thee to death; vengeance is with Heaven—Heaven will repay. To-morrow's sun shall find thee cast adrift in the boat of our slaughtered friend and guest; if it be the will of God, thou wilt not perish."

Three days had elapsed since the passing of this sentence, and Biorn, bound upon the stern of the boat, was alone—alone amidst the wild waves of the Northern sea. Racked with hunger, tormented with thirst, and chilled by cold, Biorn's situation was fearful enough, yet these bodily sufferings were not to be compared with those of his mind. Biorn slept, and in his dreams he was again a boy—a gay, light-hearted, and innocent boy, tending his loving father's sheep and goats by the burn-side at Ernestuna; and then he awoke, and lo! he was alone—awfully alone—borne onward by the swift blast of the south-west wind—he was alone, under the broad eye of Heaven. And Biorn slept again; and in his dreams he was Eorl Biorn, lord of many broad lands, and he was leading home to his proud castle the Lady Cunethrith as his bride, and he heard the sound of music, and the voices of singing-maidens and of gleemen welcoming him to his home.

But soon the sounds changed into a long, wild, unearthly screech like the cry of waterfowl, or of the Monk Redwald on the Eyot of Alvars-gat, or in the hall of Eadmund the King. Then Biorn awoke, and lo! stooping down, with fierce shrieks, came many a hungry sea-fowl, thirsting for his heart's blood, but not daring *yet* to settle. So near they came, he could see the cold, fierce gleam of their greedy eyes! And Biorn slept once more. And this time he dreamed he was gliding in a stately galley over the smooth waters of the sunlit sea with Cunethrith his bride, and he thought she dropped her pearl-laced mantle into the waves, and that, as he leaned over the side to lift it out, a pale, blood-stained face met his—it was the face of the murdered Regner Lodbrok—and he saw the white lips move and the set teeth open, and he heard an agonising voice cry, as heretofore, "On you, O my sons, I cry for vengeance on my murderer!" Biorn awoke. Was he still dreaming? He heard voices—voices like the voice of the slaughtered prince. Bending over him was a young man whose face, mien, and figure were those of Regner; the raven of Woden, too, was broidered on his breast. Worn out with hunger, thirst, and terror, Biorn sunk back insensible!

The youths Hingwar, Hubba, and Halfdane, the three sons of Regner Lodbrok and Thora of the Golden Locks, were returning from a successful

expedition, when they beheld, drifting helplessly upon the waves, a boat without either sail or oar. They speedily perceived its Danish build, and, as they steered nearer, they recognised the well-known boat of their long-lost father. The noble youths were soon alongside, and there, pinioned and bound, they found the English huntsman, apparently in the arms of death.

Biorn recovered, but he lay long hovering between life and death. With returning strength, however, came no repentance. By the time he was strong enough to speak, he had his lying story ready. Lodbrok, he declared, had been ignominiously murdered by Eadmund, King of the East Angles, and he had himself been exposed on the sea, as the only witness of the base deed, and as having taken the part of the murdered prince. "See!" cried the renegade Biorn—"see, the old gods both of English and of Danes protect the right, and me, even Biorn, have they guided to urge you, sons of a butchered father, to wreak vengeance on the head of the murderer!"

Several years had passed since the occurrence of the events already detailed. East Anglia had been invaded by repeated swarms of heathen Northmen, who penetrated in their black galleys up the numerous rivers into the very heart of the country,

burning the minsters, and laying waste the homesteads with fire and sword. These fierce hordes were led on by the sons of Lodbrok. A great battle had been fought near Theodford, and after a brave resistance, the East-English were defeated, and their King a fugitive.

On the side of the enemies of God fell Biorn, like Balaam, the son of Beor, with a javelin in his black and treacherous heart!

It was a fair summer night, and a clear moon shone amongst the alder trees which fringed the beck, and hung over the rude wooden bridge of Hoxne. Two lovers walked beside the stream, and lingered awhile upon the bridge. There they talked of the troubles and dangers which everywhere surrounded them, and of the small probability of their being united in holy wedlock during the war-time, for Beowulf was poor, and the father of Hilda was rich and avaricious. One long, last kiss, and the lovers parted—Hilda to her home in the hamlet hard by, Beowulf to wander he knew not whither. As he lingered a moment, leaning over the rustic bridge, he fancied he saw something glitter in a ray of moonlight which fell beneath the planks. Beowulf sprang into the bed of the streamlet, which was low from the summer drought, and there beheld, crouched down, but arrayed in royal insignia (in which Kings

did not then fear to go to battle), Eadmund, the conquered King of the East Angles. The monarch at once declared himself a fugitive from the common foe, and added that he need not fear that his hiding-place had been discovered by a countryman and a subject. Beowulf swore fidelity, and departed. In two short hours Eadmund was a prisoner in the hands of a detachment of a Danish garrison, then encamped in the neighbouring valley of the Waveney, and Beowulf, laden with silver pieces, threw himself at the feet of Hilda. But the English maiden rejected the traitor with scorn, and Beowulf, an object of popular hatred, and an outcast, perished miserably of hunger. Eadmund's fate was not long uncertain. Refusing with horror and scorn the invitation to purchase life by apostasy, the Christian King fell dead, pierced by a hundred arrows, beneath the oak of Hoxne.

To this day the simple country-folk see the golden sheen of the armour of the martyred King in the shining gravel of the beck, and no betrothed lovers ever dare to cross the bridge of Hoxne.



C H A P T E R X X I.

Red Cheeks and White Collars—Our John—Godly Fishers—
Herbert de Losinga—Look-outs—The Bishop of British
Columbia.

NEEXT day was Sunday, and Francesco and I remained at Salburn. In the morning I attended divine service (there was but one) in the grand old half-ruined church; in the afternoon I strolled out upon a neighbouring common, where I lay listening to some ancients who were discoursing about the spirited games of *Camp* they had engaged in in their youth, and watching the country lads and fisher-boys at cricket. As for the Scotch bagman who was so strong in denouncing Sunday recreation and cleanliness, he, with true Glasgow Presbyterian consistency, kept close in the public-house all day in a state of stupid drunkenness. Towards evening I went down to the sea to bathe, and on my return along the sweetbriar-scented lanes met a family party which extended almost from bank to bank.

There was an elderly man, all red cheeks and white collars, dragging a small green waggon containing an immense baby, all red cheeks and staring eyes, and supporting with his other arm an elderly woman, all red cheeks and white apron. This red-cheeked woman had hold of a chubby little girl of seven, whose other hand was held in that of a handsome young fellow with whom she was chattering, and whom I at once conjectured to be her brother. Right pleasant was he to look on. Not tall; he was strong, well-knit, active. His face was of a not uncommon type of Norfolk beauty. Hair, dark-brown, fine, and slightly curling at the ends; eyes, dark-grey; nose, straight; face without beard or whiskers; cheekbones, a little prominent; complexion, clear, ruddy, and rather dark. He wore a loose coat of black velveteen with pearl buttons, a dark-red handkerchief, and a brown felt hat, in which was stuck a bit of faded sweetbriar. When this pleasant-looking party had passed by, I could not help turning round to look back at them, and, so doing, saw on the ground a child's rattle, which I concluded was the property of the immense baby in the green waggon. The restoration of this important article led to my joining the party, who I found were on their way home to a cottage on the edge of the common. In the course of conversation, chancing to mention that I was on my way to Yarmouth, the

red-cheeked woman exclaimed, "Well, tu be sure, that's cur'ous, but sartin sure then you must come in and take a bit o' supper. It's our John's last night at home, and he's going to Yarmouth hisself te morning, to work at Mr. Sisson, the butcher's, so you can both go along with one another. What does my man say to that?"

"Our John" was the young man; "my man" was the red-cheeked one with the collars.

"My man" seemed much disconcerted at being asked for a direct opinion, but after taking a piece of grass out of his mouth, to effect which manoeuvre he was obliged to stop the whole procession, he made answer that, "For all he knew on, it would du stammin' well; why not? he should like to know; and if not, why it warn't o' no consekens, not as he knew on; 'twaunt likely; and if his advice was asked, which no un need trouble to du without they liked, why, his advice was, don't yow go a jarney in ones when yow might go it in tus, for in any priminary or malahank tus could help each other, which ones couldn't; 'twaunt likely; as Jack would find out to his cost one of these days, and, therefore, all he could say was, 'why, come in to supper,' which being only a chap of few words he wished he could say perliter, but if he spoke short, why he meant sweet, that a did, as sure as his name was Jack Kemp."

I was pleased at the prospect of such a comrade

for the next day's trudge, and, being hungry after my bathe, I gladly accepted the hospitable offer. Meanwhile, "our John" was holding a conversation with some young men who had come up, and who seemed to be asking for his company at the "Fox and Goose."

"Nay, old lads," was the answer; "it's my last night at home, and I can't leave father and mother."

"What, only them?" was the retort.

What John Kemp said to this I did not catch, but when he rejoined us, I could see by the waning daylight that he was as red in the face as the setting sun. His mother looked fondly at him, and said, "Thou art a good lad, John, that thou art, and we'll be main sorry to lose thee, and so will some one else too, I reckon. Do you know," she continued, "I count that Mary Ives will be at ours by this time, so we must go in at once; I asked her to come up and mind baby."

John Kemp looked delighted and grateful, and well he might, but he said nothing, for at that moment we reached the garden-gate of the tidy white cottage, and were met by a pretty blue-eyed damsel, the same who had been asked up "to mind baby," which, however, she didn't even attempt to do, for that gigantic infant was whipped into its cradle by its mother in a moment without being awakened. The supper was famous, but it was a

long time before it was served up, because John Kemp and Mary Ives retired to the garden, under the pretext of "seeing the bees," which, by-the-bye, must long since have gone to their hives for the night. Perhaps, however, that hour was sweet enough without bees' honey, for good Mrs. Kemp told me that her John and Mary were betrothed to each other, and were to be married as soon as the former was out of his time. Supper ended, I returned to the inn, and the following evening, at the hour of sunset, John Kemp, Francesco, and I, hot and dusty from our long walk, entered the North Gates of Yarmouth.

A strange town is that which we then entered, nor does all broad England contain its like. What time the Divine Child was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the land whereon Yarmouth now stands lay far beneath the waves in the wide entrance of an estuary which, in three branches, ran up into the heart of the country. It was to guard this estuary that the Romans erected their great castellated Station of Garianonum, whose ruins are still a noble monument of that extraordinary people. It was up this estuary that the storm-winds, according to the schoolmaster of Salburn, blew the bark of Lodbrok the Dane, and stranded him at the foot of the low sand-cliff of Redeham. But in later English-Saxon times the mouth of the estuary began to silt



CHAPTER XXII.

The Ancient Seamen—Ventriss's Opening—Rehoboth—Dandy Perkins—The Antiquary.

ON entering Yarmouth I took an affectionate leave of Francesco, whom I may here mention I never saw again, as he was bent upon journeying up to London by way of Lowestoft, Ipswich, and Colchester. Promising to call for John Kemp in an hour's time, I inquired my way to the "Seamen's Hostel," where I hoped to find my Uncle Grimmer. I was directed to an edifice which stood near the Church, and was shaded by a grove of trees which adorns the end of the spacious market-place. The "Hostel" was an antiquated red-brick building, surrounding a court-yard in which there were as many flower-beds as there were tenements. Amongst the sweet and flaunting old-fashioned flowers—white lilies, roses, gillyflowers, hollyhocks, prince's feather, Aaron's rod, and the like—there stood in each bed a white flagstaff, and as I entered the quadrangle each staff had its flag flying, for it was the anniversary of one of Nelson's

houses, were *then* separated by wide flats of drifting sand, scantily held together in places by tufts of whitish-green marram-grass and dusky restharrow; while here and there grew the eringo with its crown of thorns, the gold-tinted sandwort, and the sea-convolvulus, glorious with its dark-green leaves and starry flowers. Overlooking the sea, and those celebrated "Roads" whose name is loved by all lovers of "Robinson Crusoe, and the river, and the sandy flats, and the flashing "Broad" of Breydon behind, towered up many a gawky windmill; and spindlegshanked "look-outs," built of wood, stood with their feet deep-buried in the heavy sands of the beach.

Such was Great Yarmouth, and as I try to describe it, a feeling of deep affection for that dear old place and its inhabitants rises within me, and I thank God that He afterwards raised up for a time so great an instrument to work His work therein as was brave GEORGE HILLS, now first Bishop of British Columbia.



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victories. In the midst of the courtyard stood a somewhat dilapidated white statue holding a money-box, and on the pedestal was this inscription in gold letters—

"Pray, remember ^o_y Ancient Fishermen."

On the bench near the entrance-gate there sat six or seven old men habited in threadbare blue coats, with their weatherbeaten faces and hoary locks appearing through clouds of tobacco smoke. Worthy sons of the old Vikings were they, every one of them! Some of them were "Agamemnon men," heroes who had fought and bled for King and country under the immortal Nelson. Approaching an "Ancient Seaman," and taking off my cap in reverence to his age and noble looks, I inquired for Matthew Grimmer. I was directed to the second door on the right-hand side, and entering the low portal I found the good old man—feebler indeed than heretofore, but still hale and hearty—sitting in an arm-chair and reading his Bible, which, by its size and faded green baize cover, I immediately recognised as having belonged to my great-aunt Grimmer. The old man gripped me heartily by the hand, and a tear glistened in his eye as he muttered, "I al'ust expected him and counted on his coming, and now, bless the lad, he *is* come, bless the Lord!" My heart was much softened by the kindness of my mother's uncle, and I told him

the reasons which had led to my leaving Uncle Sam's. As soon as I had finished, the old man rose slowly, placed his hands on my head, and gave me his blessing, adding, "Look 'ee here, lad; see what the Word says, 'In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird;' and them birds ain't mavishes, mind. Besides, what did my lord say? bless his honour! 'England expects every man to do his duty.' That's been my *morter* ever sin' my lord made that signal at Trafalgar; and, now I'm getting an old man, and like to foller my lord, I'm main glad to find there's chips of the good old English block left yet."

After a long talk, in the course of which I learned that Cousin Bill was at sea in the schooner of which he was now skipper and part owner, and that Bessie was the flourishing landlady of an eating-house and lodgings in Ventriss's Opening near the quay, I took my leave for the night, and calling as I had promised for John Kemp, proceeded with him to find lodgings at my cousin's."

Ventriss's Opening was a strange little street of old houses, with the trees and shipping of the quay at one end, and with the other blocked up by a remarkably small meeting-house built of white-washed wood, which looked as if it had stuck there accidentally while making an unsuccessful attempt to force a thoroughfare. Under the meeting-house, whereon was painted in enormous letters "Rehoboth

Chapel," was a very small grocer's shop, presided over by a very small moist-looking grocer, who sold sanded sugars in elephant-hide paper during the six week-days, and preached strong Calvinism on what he called the "Sabbath" to a select congregation of his own debtors, who, to an old woman, held him in exceeding dread. From a house in the middle of the Opening a sign-board projected, inscribed—

GRIMMER'S NAVAL EATING HOUSE.

Eel Pies. Lodgings for Single Men. Pop. Black Beer.

TRY OUR FIRST CLASS DINNERS.

Bessie was cutting up a steaming-hot leg of roast pork as we entered, and in her astonishment at my addressing her by name, dropped the carving-knife into the gravy. She had grown very stout, but looked as bright as ever, and, like a sensible woman who knew what became her, still wore cherry-coloured ribbons, as she did when I first beheld her. Leaving the knife in the gravy, she welcomed me cordially, and gave a hearty greeting to John Kemp, whose introduction I soon effected. Half-an-hour later, as we sat eating our supper of roast pork, stuffing, and baked potatoes, Bessie agreed to receive us both as lodgers, three beds, as luck would have it, being vacant in her big lodging-room, which ran right across the house from Ventriss's Opening into

Green Dragon Row. There were six beds in this room, of which three were already engaged by as many lodgers, whom I had perhaps better introduce at once. The bed of state then, the only four-poster, was occupied by Mr. Albert Perkins, surnamed the "Dandy." This youth was a haberdasher's shopman—I beg his pardon, a haberdasher's *assistant*. He was one of those contemptible little animals who seem to be bred for the express purpose of dispensing miscellaneous articles of insignificant haberdashery. Abjectly servile on week-days in the "Emporium of Fashionable Drapery and Commercial Sacrifice," as his swindling master styled his shop, he was disgustingly insolent to women out of shop on Sundays. It was his delight to puff the smoke of his cabbage-leaf cigar in a girl's face, and then to cry, "Serve'er right; why ain't she more 'ansome.'" With these qualities this young Cockney, for such he was, was not destitute of a kind of simpering, effeminate, pink-and-white good looks, and with these, heightened, as he supposed, by rivers of pomatum, dandified little boots, watch-chain without watch, shiny hat, and tiny dog-headed cane, he did, as he averred, much execution amongst milliners' apprentices and ladies' maids. In this indeed, as in other matters, his word was not to be trusted, but it may have been so, for, whatever the modern "rights of women" champions may allege to the contrary, the male sex certainly does not enjoy a

monopoly of fools. Charley Newton and Ted Lake, the two other lodgers, were fine-looking and not unintelligent young fellows, but although open and manly, they were, I fear, reckless and careless in their habits. By trade they were shipwrights, and the black sides of many a gallant ship that still breasts the Baltic billows have been pressed by their blue linen jackets.

After I had been a few weeks at Yarmouth I began to look out for some situation, for I was getting low in pocket, as well as heartily tired of an idle life. While uncertain what I should attempt to turn my hand to, I one day stumbled on an advertisement, as I was reading the newspaper to old Grimmer, which settled the question. It ran as follows:—

“Wanted immediately, an intelligent young man, who can write a good hand, as secretary and librarian to a gentleman of fortune. The highest references required. Salary 12s. a-week. Apply at the printer’s.”

And apply I did that very morning, and at noon received a letter directing me to repair to a mansion on the quay, belonging to Stuteville Kenworthy, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A., F.L.S., F.R.G.S., V.P.N., N.A.S., &c., &c., &c. I was on the spot at the appointed time, dressed in my best clothes, which had been transmitted to me by Ulick from Norwich, and rang the bell, not without considerable trepidation as I reflected on the number of letters which adorned



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"Ha! Winwood!" said the old gentleman, "Winwood! Winwood! a very respectable person; thinks too he knows something of science and hoar antiquity, but he's a mere smatterer, nothing more, but still undeniably reputable. Come, you don't look coarse or beefy (*I couldn't put up with any one about me who was coarse or beefy*), and so I'll engage you at once—that is, if you accept my offer of nine and sixpence a-week."

"I thought, sir, you said ten shillings," said I.

"Well, if I *did* say so, I'll make it ten shillings, but it's too much for one with so young a face. Now, pray, go away, and don't creak with your shoes, or make a noise with your feet in the hall as you go out; and be here to-morrow at ten precisely. Your hours will be from ten to five, far too short for ten shillings; but you don't look beefy."

So saying, the little old gentleman closed his cabinet with a bang and pointed to the door. The sour-looking housekeeper let me out, and I confess I breathed more freely when I once more stood in the open street. It is dreadful to deal with folks who are devoid of human sympathy, and such I could plainly see was the case with my new master. I was rejoiced, however, to have obtained employment, and returned in triumph to tell Uncle Grimmer the result of my application. To be independent is one of the first of blessings.



C H A P T E R X X I I .

Irksome Service — Domnoc — The Lady of North Repps
Cottage — Workmen's Wants — Golden Treasure — The
Dandy's Slave.

TWOW years of service, full of incidental advantages and happiness, but shorn of all that renders service a grateful burden—the kindly sympathy of the employer. I soon found that the reputedly learned and scientific Mr. Stuteville Kenworthy was a humbug and a sham. He had money in plenty, and so could buy every work on Archæology or Natural Science which was worth reading, and his wealth secured to him agents and collectors in all directions, but he never worked or explored for himself. He wrote, however, in the journals of the antiquarian and scientific societies, whereof he was the honoured (because wealthy) patron, or vice-president; and by illustrating his papers with engravings at his own expense, he made a vast amount of trash go down with the subservient

treasurers of gold-worshipping committees. It is, however, fair to admit that his papers did sometimes contain new and valuable information ; they were the substance of the reports of the learned gentleman's agents, done into pompous English by the learned gentleman himself. It may seem strange that I should have remained in a situation which was so irksome to me. The reasons are easily explained. First, I did not want to be out of employment. Then I had access to a magnificent library, and to collections of antiquities, fossils, and the like, by means of which I was enabled to gratify my natural inclination to study Archæology and Geology. I delighted, moreover, in the expeditions on which I was occasionally sent into distant parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, to collect antiques and fossils, to rub brasses, copy inscriptions, and measure earthworks, in order to supply materials for my master's communications to the learned societies already named. Thus, after an extraordinarily high tide, I was sent to Dunwich, and returned with hundreds of coins and objects of British, Roman, English-Saxon, and Mediaeval art, which were found on the beach, on the site of what had once been a part of the ancient city of Domnoc, which the sea-waves have now so sadly shorn of its ancient glory. The sea at that place, driven by certain winds, scours away the sand which it has deposited at the foot of the cliff,

and objects of ancient art are there discovered stuck upon the surface of an understratum of clay, and are picked up by children and fishermen. Twice I was sent to the coprolite diggings of the red crag of Felixtow, a place which preserves the name and memory of the Burgundian Apostle of East Anglia. Twice, after falls of the cliff, I was despatched to Cromer; and once, as will be seen hereafter, I went to measure the ancient camp of Brancaster, the Branodunum of the Romans.

One day, upon one of these expeditions, an accident occurred which led to my acquaintance with the most remarkable and gifted woman I ever saw. I was standing on the edge of a cliff at Overstrand, during a gale of wind, watching the launch of a life-boat starting to the rescue of a brig which had stuck upon the sands, and had hoisted signals of distress. This lifeboat (like that at Sheringham) was the sole gift of a lady, and she herself, seated in a small carriage on the shore, was animating the men in their exertions. While observing this exciting scene, the portion of the shaly cliff on which I stood suddenly gave way under my feet, and I was precipitated some fifty feet upon the beach, where my head struck against a piece of drift-wood, and I lay stunned and apparently dead. When I came to myself, I found that I was in bed in a small but exquisitely furnished room full of books and pictures,

and seated by me in a wheel-chair was the identical lady whom I had seen upon the shore encouraging the beachmen in their efforts to effect the launch. Her face I can never forget. More like that of a man than that of a woman, it literally beamed with intellect and benevolence, and the large, prominent, and brilliant "language" eyes were instinct with genius and sympathy. Around the face were the snow-white folds of a plain muslin cap, for the lady, although in middle life she had embraced the faith of Catholic Christendom, and had been baptised into the English Church, had been born of a family which then belonged to the Society of Friends, and never entirely gave up the outward garb of that eccentric community. The injuries I had sustained by my fall proved to be but trifling, rest and quiet only being prescribed; but I remained for nearly a fortnight a willing guest at the cottage of my kind and generous hostess, whose mind seemed a depository of the most varied stores of learning. Her knowledge of languages was indeed surprising, and her powers of comparative philology so extraordinary, that she had a short cut to the interpretation of tongues which was closed to others. University first-classmen, I was assured, had read classical authors under her superintendence, and she had interpreted an Esquimaux inscription which had defied all previous attempts at elucidation.

With a diffidence which often accompanies true genius, she had published little, and even her great work, the Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle into modern English, was printed for private circulation only. Geology and archæology were her favourite studies, and her beautiful abode was a perfect storehouse of valuable specimens, collected with discriminating yet generous enthusiasm. Of these, not a few may now be seen in the Museum of Norwich. My hostess had in the highest degree the exquisite, never-to-be-sufficiently-valued gift of human sympathy. The *nihil humani alienum a me* might have been her chosen motto, and she had the happy art of making a stranger feel at home in such a degree, that in less than two days I felt as if I had known her all my life. Her greatest pleasure seemed to be to interest the young in scientific pursuits and in the good and glorious works of God's creation, and to open out for their benefit the vast stores of information which she had accumulated by patient study and acute observation from correspondents in all parts of the world, and by the experience of travel, for, though a sad sufferer and a cripple from her birth, she had visited several distant and little-known regions. "The Cottage"—for by that name the lady's habitation was affectionately known far and near—stood in the perfectly unenclosed centre of a small grassy dell, whose rounded sides

were clothed with woods of oak and silver balm-of-Gilead firs, and in front, at the lower end, lay the blue waters of the Northern sea, the view of which was only broken by the tower of a half-ruined church. Rabbits, hares, and many beautiful and rare foreign animals and birds fed around the house in perfect security and peace; and in a garden above, seedling rhododendrons and tree fuchsias attained a size and perfection which by many would have been deemed impossible in so exposed a situation as the coast of Norfolk.

Alas! that Catholic-minded, noble, and benevolent lady no longer lives to benefit the poor she loved so well—to educate the young, to enlighten all around her—yet the sketch attempted in the foregoing lines may serve to remind some of that great and good woman, ANNA GURNEY of Northrepps Cottage. *Requiescat in Pace.*

For about a year after my engagement with Mr. Kenworthy, I considered it no breach of my duty as librarian to borrow and take home books to read at night, and these not only opened and improved my mind, but so riveted my attention, that I spent most of my leisure time in reading them. At the end of the first year, however, my employer declared that "his eyes were opened by a sudden discovery" of my practices in this respect, and he commanded me in future to abstain from any such "clandestine

courses," on pain of instant dismissal. That, in many ways, was an evil to me, for not only did it throw an obstacle in the way of private study, but it took away one motive for remaining at home at nights.

And here I must express my conviction, now the settled conclusion of many years' experience—not only in my own case, but in the case of multitudes dwelling in such a town as that wherein I write—how absolutely necessary it is that a *general* effort be made to provide places of *innocent recreation and social resort for young men*, wherein they may assemble and amuse themselves through the long winter evenings. It is the *want* of these that leads thousands of our young men, who ought to be the strength and life-blood of our fatherland, into dissipation and drunkenness, and which has been the ruin of multitudes who might otherwise have led happy and noble lives. What are the clergy about in this matter? They preach, it is true, as they are most bounden, against the sins of youth; but what harmless sports, what places of innocent recreation do they seek to substitute in the towns for those low and vicious entertainments which they are for ever and rightly denouncing? In this matter the curse of a sour-visaged Puritanism and of a selfish Pharisaism, so alien at once to the cheerful, loving spirit of the Gospel, and to the open, manly prin-

ciples of the Church of England, is still brooding upon us, and the result is seen in the state of moral degradation, yes, and of death in life, in which multitudes of young men live and move and have their being. It is all very well for unpractical dreamers to say, "Why can't they stay at home and read, or sit quiet?" but in nine cases out of ten the thing's impossible. 'Prentice lads and shopmen, after work hours, *can't* sit at home. Where are they to sit? At *home*, where a squalling baby is being undressed? or in family circles of uncongenial masters or landladies, who expect their apprentices and lodgers "to give no trouble" till bed-time? No, the thing's impossible, and contrary to human nature. But it will be said, "Surely there are night-schools; why don't the young men go there?" I answer that happily there *are* such institutions now in all our great towns, and great is the good they have effected, and most heartily do I wish them success. But, after all, these schools only supply the wants of *some*. They require to be *supplemented* by workingmens' club-rooms, where cheerful society and innocent amusements may be enjoyed without the temptations of the public-house or low theatre, or the drivelling vulgarity of the so-called music hall. Many a capital fellow has no inclination for learning, and the infamous and murderous system of late closing, as well as the particular nature of certain trades, begets

a craving for some pleasurable *excitement* after the dull routine or mill-horse grind of the day. A mechanic or apprentice is not to be condemned as a reprobate character, because, after fourteen hours' hard work in a fusty shop or dusty factory, he feels indisposed to sit down to cram Euclid, or to hear Mr. Jonadab Allslop lecture on the "Anatomy of the Moderate Drinker's Intestines" (it is the *moderate* drinkers that these fanatics are always the most hard upon), or Professor Slowworm upon the "Creeping Things of the Old Testament." And let it be remembered that the class of youths whose natural temperament or physical condition indisposes them to mental exertion, are as worthy of consideration, and require to be cherished and shielded from temptation as much as any other class.

Thus much have I said in behalf of my brothers, the young working men and shopmen and apprentices in towns, and this in no wise as excusing the courses into which I fell myself after my first year's residence in Yarmouth. God knows that what I did then I did with my eyes open, against light and against knowledge, and with the fall and fate of Stephen Hartley staring me in the face. And now some "kind" reader may perchance expect that I am about to present him with a record of my religious or irreligious "experiences." But nothing of the kind. I look with loathing on such mawkish

and impertinent confessions, and must mistrust the tendency of those so-called "religious" biographies of which the present age is so fond, wherein a man who fulfils his duties tolerably well, or who *without* this, being perhaps a rogue and a Pharisee, speaks with a snuffle, and is firmly assured of his own "conversion" and of the damnation of nine-tenths of his fellows, is vaunted as a high model and bright example of Christian perfection. I have myself no "experiences" to relate, but will simply record a few facts which may partly account for my conduct. First, then, although before I left Norwich I had been confirmed, I had not sealed my vows by approaching the Holy Table. It was "not the custom" of the choir of Norwich to "stay;" the voice of praise ceased before the commencement of the Communion Office, and, to my irreparable loss, I followed the multitude in doing evil. Next, little by little, I came to neglect public worship. The exclusive pew system, with its Pharisaic and unscriptural distinctions of persons in God's house, with its attendant pomp of beadledom and fusty old pew-openers in black bombazine, chilled and repelled me, and after going to Church coldly and formally once on Sunday, I gradually almost entirely ceased to attend public worship. Thus, when my passions were growing stronger and stronger, and my temptations more numerous, I became the less

able to restrain the one and to overcome the other. Of the acquaintances I made, some were pleasant and innocent enough. I was always fond of boarding the ships in the harbour, and I thus came to know Philemon Tresawna and John Pentreryn, two crisp-haired, grey-eyed, dark-complexioned sailor lads from St. Ives and Fowey in Cornwall, and Sandie Dinwoodie, of Calderscales, near Greenock, and Knud Andersen, who belonged to a timber ship from the Stavanger Fjord, in Norway, and lastly, dearest of all, Giuliano Melillo, from the Lagoon of Venice. To my acquaintance with these strangers who from time to time sailed into harbour, I can look back with unmixed pleasure, so much did I learn from them of foreign places and foreign manners; but this is not the case with my intercourse with some other youths of my own age who were natives of Yarmouth, for with these I often engaged in foolish pranks of which I now feel ashamed. As long, however, as I had my studies to go to, I think I did not take much harm, but after I was prevented from taking the books home, my conduct began rapidly to deteriorate—and this chiefly because I was fool enough to fall under the influence of Dandy Perkins. It fell out thus. I had packed up, in the small knapsack I brought with me on my first arrival, the little bag which had been given me by Dame Goodram, and which—

though from the feel I had supposed it to contain agates and amber—I had never untied or unsealed. One day, however, having occasion for more money than I possessed at the time, it struck me that I might sell some of the amber to one of the many Jews who dealt in that article in the Broad Row. I accordingly unloosed the thongs of leather which closed the bag, and emptied the contents upon my bed. To my amazement a smaller leathern bag fell out from amongst a number of pebbles, which, being opened, disclosed seventeen sovereigns in gold, a crooked sixpence with a hole in it, a gold coin of the Emperor Mauricius Tiberius, set in filagree of ancient workmanship, and bank notes amounting to £65 ! I thus suddenly found myself in possession of more than £80. My first impulse was to spend the whole sum at once, and fit out myself and all my friends with everything we could want or wish for; the second was to use the most rigid economy, and put the sum by for the future. I took, however, neither of these courses, but bought a warm rug for my Uncle Grimmer, who had lately had a severe stroke of palsy, a number of books and a gorgeous breast-pin for Ulick, and presents for Bessie and Cousin Bill, whose ship chanced to be under repair at the time. I mentioned my discovery, however, to nobody, and having made the already-named purchases, resolved to lay up the remainder against a

rainy day. It was this foolish and ungenerous secrecy which caused me so much after-trouble. About half-a-year after I had laid it by, I went to my store to withdraw a pound or two for present use. While counting the remainder—which still amounted to more than £70—I suddenly became aware that I was not alone, as I supposed. Dandy Perkins was standing over me, glowering at the money which was spread upon the bed.

"How did you come by all that, Cloughton?" he asked, in his thin, squeaky voice.

"Honestly, you may be sure," I answered.

"Oh, of course, *honestly!*" he retorted with a cunning smile—"of course, *honestly*; you've saved it, I suppose, out of your ten shillings a-week. You're a clever fellow, anyhow; especially when I know how much goes weekly to pay for bed and board in this wretched rat-hole!"

"No, I've not saved it," I said.

"No, so I thought; some one gave it you, I suppose?"

"Yes, you are right there, it *was* given me; and as I haven't told anyone about it, I shall be much obliged if you don't mention it to my cousins; perhaps they'll think I ought to have told them about it before."

"Likely enough!" was the answer; "though they wouldn't be bound to believe your story, if you did

tell 'em, any more than I do. *Given* you, indeed! Catch anyone *giving* you seventy pounds! I say, Cloughton, it's a fine thing to have a rich old master, and the run of his house, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?" I answered, turning red with anger; "you don't mean to insinuate——"

"No, I mean to insinuate nothing," he interrupted, "so you needn't look so guilty."

"Guilty!" said I—"guilty of what?"

"Oh, nothing! I should have said *red*, but the word *guilty* slipped out whether I would or no; of course I was only in joke. However, as you wish me to be mum, mum's the word with me, for I wish you and me to be good friends, Cloughton; and so I'll just be as if I'd never set eyes upon the shiners. Before you put 'em up, however, you can't lend a poor beggar one, can you? for you see, to say the truth, I'm precious 'ard up, and I'll never say nothing to nobody, and will pay you back next quarter—'pon my honour I will."

I did not rely much upon the Dandy's "honour;" but I was terribly annoyed by his insinuations, of which I plainly saw the drift; and feeling that my keeping the fact of my being possessed of so large a sum of money from my nearest relatives was in itself a discreditable, if not a suspicious circumstance, I was anxious to propitiate the little beast, and so dispose him to silence. Of course I ought to have

knocked him down at once, but I was weak, and therefore I foolishly lent him a sovereign, and from that moment I became his slave. From that day forwards, Perkins was continually pestering me for loans, which I had not the sense or firmness to refuse him. He spent the money, I found, in various low places of amusement, and made a show of disinterestedness, when demanding a loan, by inviting me to accompany him. These invitations I at first refused, but at length consented when he told me that the Royal Britannia Concert Hall was to be open on *Sunday* evening for the performance of *sacred* music. What was the result of this I will relate in the next chapter.





CHAPTER XXIV.

Going Down—Branodunum—The Truth—Dismissed—The Thrashed Dandy-Monkey—Uncle Sam again—Murder.

DOWN, down, down! I did not go down more rapidly into the deep waters at Greenstaith in my early youth, than I deteriorated in character under the Dandy's tutorage at the Royal Britannia. The step from attendance on Sunday evenings for sacred music to attendance on week-nights was a short one, and soon taken. For some three months I was in a most critical state, and now, when I look back to that period of degradation, I can only feel thankful for that combination of circumstances which led to my emancipation from the ignoble chains which bound me. Shortly after my alliance with the Dandy, my engagement with Mr. Kenworthy came to an abrupt termination. It fell out in this wise. I had been sent, as already mentioned, to measure the camp and earthworks at Brancaster. While in that neighbourhood I fell in with a young

gentleman, an undergraduate of the University of Oxford, who gave me a number of extracts from a MS. written in the year 1715 by one John Steele, and preserved in the Bodleian Library. These extracts, which contained an interesting account of the then state of the Roman fortress of Brancaster, I worked into a paper with such information as I could obtain on the spot, and sent the whole, together with my own measurements, to my employer. A few mornings after my return, the learned gentleman gave me some proof-sheets, from the forthcoming number of a local antiquarian society, to correct for him for the press. It was my own paper, save that my master had added a pompous exordium. I made the one alteration which in my first anger I deemed needful, and returned the copy to the printers. Next week the new number arrived. I cut it and placed it beside my master's desk, and then retired to my own place. Presently, the old gentleman gave a violent start, and then, rising, he tottered across the room, his face quivering with suppressed rage.

"Boy, what's this?" he asked in a stifled voice, as he pointed to the title of the first paper in the Journal. It ran thus—"Observations on the Camp of Brancaster, the Branodunum of the Romans. By Julian Cloughton and Stuterville Kenworthy, Esq., M.A., F.S.A., F.R.S., V.P.N., N.A.S., &c., &c., &c."

No answer from the "boy."

"Boy, what's this?" cried the learned gentleman again, his voice rising to a screech with increasing passion; "tell me, or I'll strike you."

"The *truth*, sir," I answered boldly, as I smiled and looked him steadily in the face—"the *truth*, sir, and you can't deny it!"

This was unanswerable. He could not deny it, but he could *dismiss* me, and he did it there and then. And thus I was thrown, or threw myself, out of my situation. When the excitement of this scene was over, I began to wish I had been less eager to assert my just rights, for although my situation was in many respects a harassing one, it at least kept me in bread, and supplied me with some means of intellectual improvement. The news of my dismissal caused a vast deal of conversation in the big bedroom that evening, and excited as much speculation as the announcement that a new lodger was expected. We were all in high talk when the newcomer came in. He was a mere lad, between sixteen and seventeen, slight, with blue eyes, fair hair, and a well-shaped head. He seemed shy and ill at ease, and the "good-evening" with which he returned our greetings was given in a low voice. He placed his candle upon the drawers, and I noticed that he seemed to be as long as possible undressing. After a time he put out the light, but still he did not get into bed.

"Now then, what are you waiting for?" asked Perkins, upon whom his co-lodgers had recently bestowed the additional name of "Monkey."

"Only to say my prayers," answered the newcomer, quietly, as he kneeled down beside the bed.

I think I see him now, kneeling on the bare floor, with the moonlight streaming in upon his pale brow; I think I can see him now, and hear the roar of derisive laughter which ensued; I think I can see him now, as he knelt motionless and unmoved, though a dirty boot, flung by Albert Perkins, grazed his open, fair forehead.

"Burn you, that's a shame, Monkey, and I'll pay you out for that!" shouted a deep voice; and John Kemp, the butcher, bigger and burlier than of yore, sprang out of bed and rushed across the room.

"Burn you, that's a shame!" he repeated, as he struck blow after blow upon the carcass of the unlucky Perkins, who whined like a lashed puppy, and squeaked loudly, but in vain, for me to come to his assistance. The new lodger bowed his head reverently (I felt that it was at the Name that is above every name), and then rose from his knees, and seized the sturdy arm of Kemp, while he thanked him for his interference, declaring at the same time he had not been hurt, and felt sure the boot had only been heaved at him in play. All this was said quietly, and without the least display and

ostentation; and when he had ended speaking, the lad calmly got into bed.

But John Kemp did not follow his example. He produced some matches, slowly lit a candle, and then went up to the new lodger's bedside. "I say, what's your name?" said he. "Shake hands, will you?—that is, if you're not ashamed to do so; for I tell you I'm the confoundedest coward breathing. But that's over for ever, I hope—thanks to you, lad. And now, mates," he continued, facing round to us, and leisurely turning up the sleeves of his night-shirt, displaying thereby a formidable array of muscles—"you listen to me, and hear what I've got to say. I'm stronger than all of you put together, and if I don't see you all kneeling down to-morrow night, every mother's son of you, to say your prayers, I'll give you the tidiest thrashing you ever had in your lives. I'll give you law till to-morrow, but here goes for myself to-night!"

So saying, John Kemp kneeled down in the midst of the room, held up his hands like a little child, and prayed long and earnestly. Rising at length, he once more bared his well-strung arms, and looked grimly round, saying, "Now, mates, you've had fair warning." He then got into bed again, and in five minutes was snoring, as if nothing had happened. The scene, however, made a deep impression on my mind, and led me to feel more deeply than ever how

ignoble was the life I was leading. It was Thursday night, and I resolved to visit the Britannia for the last time on the following night, and to make a clear breast of my misdeeds to Bill and Bessie, on their return home the next Sunday evening. Then, I thought, I can defy the Dandy, and be once more happy.

Next morning, I was awakened by the loud voices of Luke and Newton, who were chaffing Perkins on the licking he had received the previous night. Kemp and the new lodger had already gone to work, and I was soon left alone with the Dandy. The little wretch began almost immediately by demanding a loan of £5, which I at once refused.

"You'd better consent, Cloughton," he said; "I've one crow to pick with you already, for your not helping me last night when that big brute, Kemp, attacked me; and if you don't make up for that by tipping me a fiver, see if you don't come off second best, that's all!"

"You may do your worst," I answered; "I mean to hand all my money over to my cousins, to keep for me, as soon as ever they return from Lowestoft; and I only wish I'd never kept it away from them so long as I have."

Perkins seemed to see I was in earnest, and made no reply until just before he went out, when he leaned over my bed, saying, "Cloughton, you're only

a fool, after all; but see if I ain't revenged on you yet."

I got up late, as I had nothing to do, and spent the day longing for the return of my cousins, and writing a long letter of confession to Ulick, to whom I had already sent the news of my dismissal. At night, spite of conscience and my better self, I went to the Britannia. The place was unusually crowded, but the one face I really cared to see was absent: it was that of a girl who was niece to the proprietor, and who, I had been told, sang in the Concert Hall, against her own will and at the compulsion of her uncle. I had occasionally spoken to her, and had been struck and touched by the mingled firmness and shyness of her manner. She seemed very unhappy, and I felt interested in her, and liked to watch her pale face, bright eyes, and graceful form. Towards the end of the evening, she suddenly appeared upon the stage. After singing a solo, she passed down the room near the spot where I was sitting. I rose from my seat and was about to address her, when she bent towards me and said, in a low, thrilling voice, "Is this a place for a young man who respects himself? and should any girl who has any self-respect demean herself by associating with anyone who comes here?"

She flushed up as she said this, and her deep eyes flashed fire and scorn. I was almost petrified by

this unexpected address, but before I could answer, she was gone. And then I knew, what I had not known or even suspected before—then I knew what the interest I had felt in that girl betokened—I knew that I loved her; yes, I loved her from my soul, and I was *despicable* in her sight.

While still thrilling with the excitement caused by this revelation, I heard a voice crying for help. It was her's! I rushed into the lobby, and found her struggling in the arms of a drunken old man, who seemed to be attempting to kiss her. To fly to the spot, and to plant two well-directed blows upon her assailant, was with me but the act of a moment. The old man fell heavily, striking his head against the corner of a chest as he fell. At the same moment a crowd of riotous frequenters of the saloon rushed in from the bar, and hustled me away. And then I heard a voice cry in horror, "He is killed! he is dead!" The surging crowd opened, and I saw before me, lying on the ground, the pale and bleeding form of my Uncle Sam. "He's killed!" was again the cry; "who did it? Call the police. Murder! murder!" A door opened at my back, and a firm but gentle hand seized me by the arm and dragged me backwards into a narrow row which ran down beside the concert hall. It was the girl in whose behalf I had done the fatal deed—the girl I loved.

"He's dead!" she cried, wildly—"oh, he's dead, and it is you who have killed him! Fly, fly!"

Scarce knowing what I did, I tried to take her hand. She shuddered as my hand touched hers. "No, not now," she said, "I couldn't bear it now—there's blood upon it! But I can't forget it was done protecting me. Now, fly!"

She pointed down the row, and I obeyed and fled, stained, as I believed, with the blood of my own kinsman.





CHAPTER XXV.

Cleaned out—Flight—The Night Passage—Return—
Conclusion.

YES, I fled, scared, unreasoning, self-accused. My first well-defined desire—for at first all was chaos—was to secure my remaining money, some £30, and then to escape from Yarmouth as best I could. To my great relief, my cousins were still away from home, and none of the lodgers had come in to bed. I flew through the eating-room and upstairs, where I struck a light. To my astonishment, my box was on the bed, wide open. Inside lay a letter bearing my address. It ran as follows—“I told you I’d be revenged, you fool, and I’ve kept my word. I’m off, and I’ve borrowed your shinners, for I know ‘ow to use ‘em. My ‘umble respects to your friend the butcher. For your own sake, I expect you’ll keep things dark; but if not, you’ll never catch me, for I’m off by sea.—A. P.”

Beside the letter lay my money-bag, *empty*. And so I turned and fled again.

The night was dark, and a furious wind was blowing. Involuntarily, I made for the river-bank, and made my way out upon the wide and dreary marshes along the river-wall beside the Bure. I ran, I suppose, for nearly an hour, when I suddenly heard voices upon the wind, and, turning round, saw a light. Then, dimly seen against the sky, I beheld the huge sail of a wherry, which, with a rushing sound, was swiftly sailing up-stream before the wind. In another minute it was opposite to me, and I had gained its deck by a vigorous leap. The steersman hailed me through the darkness, for he could not see me. I advanced, and humbly begged a passage in the wherry.

"Must have it?" was the answer; "for with this wind we shan't stop to set you ashore. What's up? Where do you want to go to?"

I had no better answer to make than, "Up the river," but my questioner seemed to be above or below suspicion.

"Here's a cove wants a passage," he roared out, as he leaned forward and put his head down the cabin stairs, from whence a faint light streamed out upon the murky night; "can you find him a berth?"

"Can," was the laconic answer; "send him down below."

So down I went into the dimly-lighted cabin, where I found an old wherryman coiled up in a berth, and smoking a long clay pipe.

"Jump in thinder," said the man when I appeared, pointing with the bowl of his pipe to a kind of wooden tray; "only take care not to wake up my old dawg there. He's a cold old customer, he is, and will be glad of a bed-fellow; and you needn't be afeard, mate, for he's got no more teeth than a new-born babby."

Thus encouraged, I squeezed myself into the berth, and lay for hours listening to the hissing waters as the keel of the wherry rushed through them in its onward course, and pondering over the events of the last few hours. Conscience acquitted me of the crime of wilful blood-shedding, but it was terrible to think that a blow from my hand had cut off in the midst of his sins my own dear mother's uncle, and one, moreover, of whose house I had been so long an inmate. I bitterly thought of my own past folly, and felt that, in being robbed by Perkins, I had only been rightly served for the foolish act of admitting him as my close companion. At times, I thought of returning and giving myself up to justice, but then I feared that, howsoever innocent I might be, others would believe I had struck the fatal blow in revenge. I determined, therefore, to hide until I should learn more, and so at length I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was morning, and the wherry was lying motionless beside a little staith on the bank of one of the Norfolk Broads. As I emerged from the cabin, the steersman was hailing a comrade upon another wherry, which was but just being made fast to the land, and was asking why he had not started sooner the previous night.

"I stopped too long at the Britannia," was the reply.

"Anything up there particular?"

"Yes," was the answer, for which I waited with such terrible anxiety that I feared my legs would give way under me—"yes, such a jolly row! An old goat there was taking liberties with a modest girl—wanting to kiss her, they said—and a lad that was her sweetheart, or some'at o' sort, come up and cuts him over. The old 'un fell and smashed his old head agen a box, and lay there stunned like. Everyone thought he was dead, and called for a sawbones, and for the constable to take up the murderer, but, arter some time, the old boy comed round, and walked home hisself, with his head bound up in a yellow pocket-handkercher. Such an old figure-head you never see!"

How I drank in those words, and how deeply relieved and thankful I felt for the intelligence thus conveyed, I have no words to describe. Joy that I was guiltless, even accidentally, of my great-uncle's

blood, and hope that she in whose defence the blow was struck would feel that I had some sort of claim upon her, struggled for mastery in my mind. The feverish sense of disquiet left me, and, after a plunge into the cold waters of the Broad, and breakfast at the "Wherryman's Arms," hard by, I was myself again. The wind had changed, and a long line of down-sailing wherries began to heave in sight, in one of which I easily obtained a passage to Yarmouth.

On my arrival at Cousin Bill's, I was met by Ulick, who, on the receipt of my first letter, had obtained a holiday, and started at once to see me. He was the bearer of a letter from Canon Winwood, offering me the post of Curator of the Midland Museum—subject only to the approval of the Committee, who had expressed their willingness to be guided by himself.

How I fulfilled my resolution of owning the meanness whereof I had been guilty to my cousins—how kindly they received my confession—how I wrote thankfully to accept the proffered office, which was so far above my utmost wishes and deserts—how Ulick, as of old, sympathised with me with more than a brother's love and interest—I need not relate. Suffice it to mention that I was appointed to the Curatorship, which I still retain; and the wife whom I returned to woo and win, and who for five years was the joy and crown of my life, was that

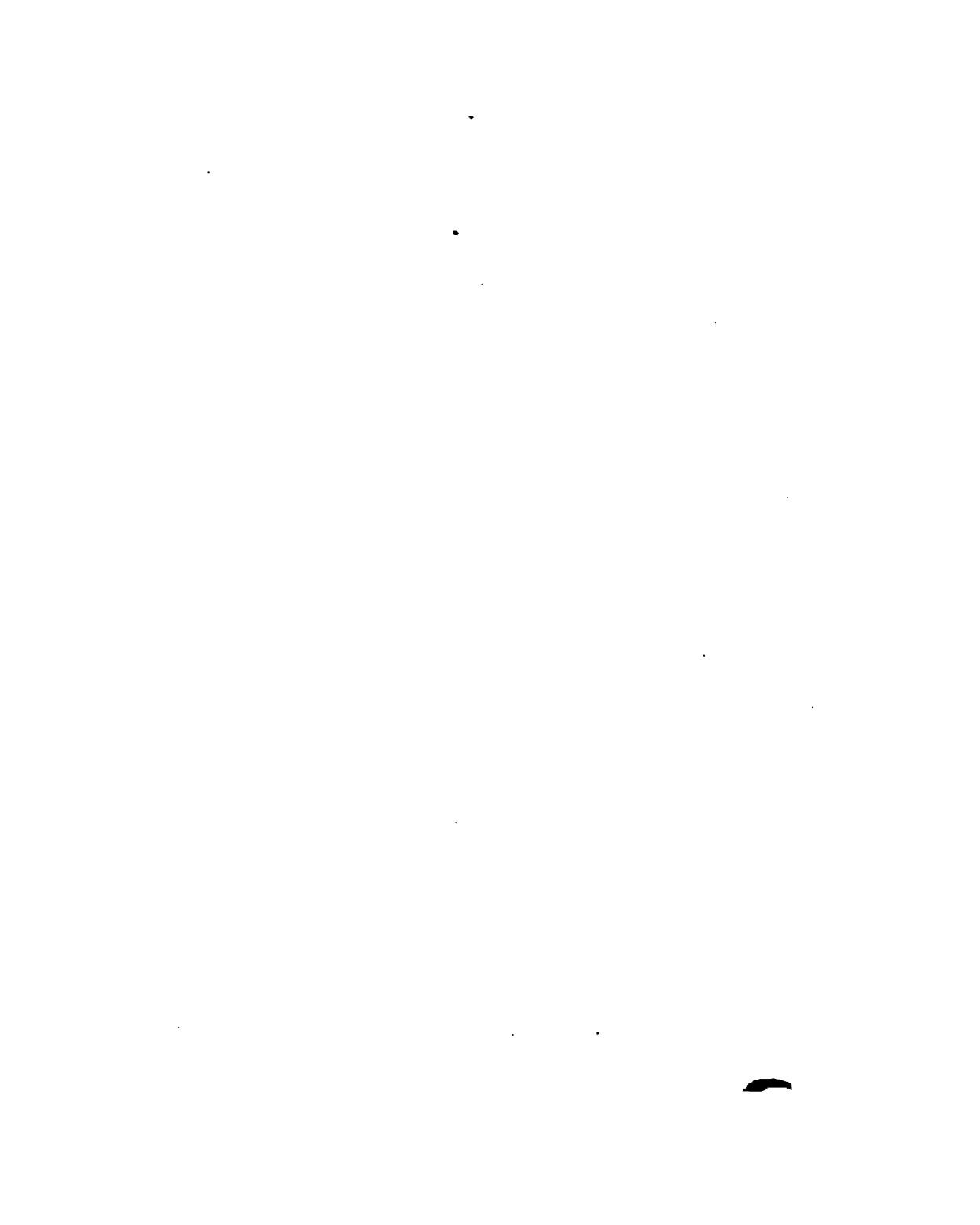
gentle girl who had appealed to my self-respect at the Britannia.

My Uncle Grimmer died, in fulness of years and respect, two years after I left Yarmouth. My Uncle Sam still lives in extreme old age, and is, I trust, a changed and better man. Ulick also has married a wife, and is flourishing, as a settler, in Canada. His eldest daughter is named "Julia;" my only son is named "Ulick Stephen," *in memoriam*. Bill and Bessie have left Ventriss's Opening, and live in a tidy house at Gorleston, which is already too small to contain the large family of curly-haired boys which is growing up around them. Bill is now addressed as "Skipper," and a finer brig than the "Bessie Bunce," whereof he is now captain and part-owner, does not sail out of the port of Yarmouth. Red-faced Ben is likewise a husband and a father. Ben's wherry is the smartest of all those that ply upon the "Three Rivers." John Kemp has prospered amazingly, and has a shop of his own in the Market Place at Yarmouth, and his marriage with Miss Mary Ives, of Salburn, was several months ago announced in the county newspapers. To Dandy Perkins, amongst other convicts, the country is indebted for the construction of some important military works in the immediate neighbourhood of Portland prison. Dr. Doler has removed to Mottlesham, and fills the offices of Town Reeve and Churchwarden to

the full satisfaction of all his neighbours, excepting the Grimshaws, who are never weary of expressing their astonishment at "the assurance of that upstart practitioner." Gripe is dead, and Uncle Sam wears his skin, lined with red flannel, as a chest-preserved in cold weather.

Reader, the brief record of my lad-life must here close on my assuming the independent position and duties of a man. In what I have written I have at least fulfilled the pledge I gave in the Introduction—that I would be *honest*. I have written the *truth*, and have told things as they *were*, not as they *ought to have been*.—Farewell.







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